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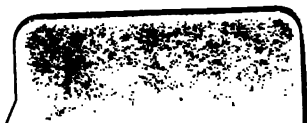
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SIX LECTURES
ON
THE CORN-LAW MONOPOLY
AND
FREE TRADE :

DELIVERED AT
THE LONDON MECHANICS' INSTITUTION,
SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS, CHANCERY LANE.

BY
PHILIP HARWOOD.

"I am persuaded that no man, and no combination of men, for their own ideas of their particular profit, can, WITHOUT GREAT IMPIETY, undertake to say that man *shall not eat his bread by his labour*; that they have no sort of right, either to prevent the labour, or to withhold the bread."—BURKE.

LONDON :
JOHN GREEN, NEWGATE STREET;
C. FOX, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND
SAMUEL CLARKE (LATE H. HOOPER), 13, PALL MALL EAST.
1843.



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LECTURE I.

MONDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 1843.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE QUESTION.

I HAVE been asked by the Anti-Corn-Law Committee of the Metropolitan Boroughs, to address you on that question which now stirs to its depths the heart of England; that question between the selfish interests of the few—the very few—and the plain, broad rights of the many; that question, whether Britain shall henceforth be a great country or a little country; whether it shall recover from the debility and exhaustion under which it now labours, to run a new race of glory and happiness, or whether it shall finally and for ever succumb at the feet of a miserable monopolising minority—that question of questions which is shortly summed up in the words, “Corn-Law Monopoly and Free-Trade.” With the resoluteness of men who know that they are right, that they have truth and justice at their back; with the fixity of purpose and the force of faith befitting men who know that right, truth and justice carry the day at last against all Parliamentary majorities, oligarchical obstructions, ministerial expediences, plausibilities, tricks and shifts whatsoever; and with the cheerful hope inspired by past successes which, however valueless in themselves, are important as recognitions of a principle,—the movers in this Anti-Corn-Law Agitation are determined to make a good finish of that which they have well begun, to come into closer and closer contact with the intellects and hearts of their countrymen, to send this agitation on and on in an ever-widening and deepening cur-

rent—till it shall have flooded the whole length and breadth of the empire, and swept away the last fragment of that monopoly-barrier which a tyrannous and sordid legislation has interposed between industry and its righteous reward, between hunger and its needed food, between the wants of one people and the superfluities of others, between the commercial and manufacturing energies of this mighty nation and the open market of the world. Of the ultimate result of this agitation no man can doubt who knows what a principle is, and what power there is in right to work itself victoriously through all the obstructions and entanglements of wrong. All things help it, as they help every cause that has on its side facts of experience and laws of nature. Good harvests and bad harvests, financial deficit, and income-tax to fill up that deficit (which does not fill it up), landlord violence and unreason, and ministerial moderation and plausibility—all things help us, if we will but help ourselves at the same time. Much work is to be done—a work of conviction for the yet unconvinced, and excitement for the apathetic; we must go on accumulating our facts and our reasonings, informing ignorance, and rending sophism; we must all work together, in a cause which is the cause of all, with warm English hearts and cool English heads—and the end will come, as surely as the rising of the morrow's sun will come.

And this is what I wish to show you this evening; that the end will come, and is coming. It is not my purpose in this lecture so much to expose the iniquity of monopoly legislation, or to illustrate, in any detail, the mischiefs which it inflicts on all our economical and social interests, as to examine the present state of the question between monopoly and free trade; to show you how far we have got in this controversy, and whereabouts we now are; to compare the state of the question now with what it was when this agitation began. We shall find that the progress of events has amazingly simplified and cleared the matter. A whole battalion of fallacies and sophisms has been routed and demolished. All along the lines of monopoly, we have posts formally surrendered

to us, or maintained against us with but a faint show and make-believe of resistance, that had used to be relied on as towers of strength. Principles are enunciated, by monopoly's chosen advocates, which contain the whole of our case, and of which nothing is wanted but the honest application. By the *dicta* of a monopolist Ministry, and the acts of a monopolist Parliament, one heavy blow and great discouragement after another has been dealt to the monopoly power,—the fraud has been stripped of one disguise after another, and there it stands tottering to its fall, awaiting but one breath of an honest national indignation to bring it all down together. We are every day coming nearer and nearer to the point at which every man, woman and child in Great Britain will see the landlord monopoly to be a naked, unadulterated wrong and nuisance.

From the recent history of this controversy, we may make out a pretty long list of dead or dying fallacies,—fallacies once solemnly paraded before the world as elementary truths,—now for ever branded as stupid blunders, or impudent lies. I mean now to go over some of the chief of these; not intending so much to refute them, as to show how, in the natural course of events, they have refuted themselves, and, having done all the service they ever can do, are gone their way to the limbo of vanities.

First in the rank of these self-exploded fallacies, is that notion on which the whole of our landlord legislation is based, *of its being possible to fix by law the price of corn*. This is what legislation has been at for hundreds of years past, and never succeeded in doing yet. The more elaborate and ingeniously complicated have been the means used, the more signal has been the failure, the more manifest the impossibility—*now* the confessed and avowed impossibility. Within the last three centuries, some scores of Acts of Parliament have been made with a view to fix prices—sometimes to fix them high, sometimes low—and by the most whimsically diversified expedients;—sometimes by imposing duties on importation, sometimes by offering bounties on exporta-

tion, sometimes by bounties on importation, sometimes by prohibiting importation and exportation both—and finally, by the dexterous juggle of the sliding scale. All in vain; the experiment has invariably failed; and the latest and most ingenious experiment has failed the most signally. Mr. Labouchere, in the Corn-Law Debate of 1840, thus sums up the operation of the sliding scale of 1828; which sliding scale was intended to keep prices at 64*s.* a quarter. Of the twelve years from 1828 to 1839 inclusive—

“Wheat had been sold at an average price under 40*s.* during 17 months; at an average between 40*s.* and 50*s.* for 23 months; between 50*s.* and 60*s.* for 48 months; between 60*s.* and 70*s.* for 38 months; between 70*s.* and 80*s.* for 16 months; and between 80*s.* and 90*s.* for one month.”

So it is now coming to be understood that Acts of Parliament cannot fix prices, any more than they can fix that on which prices depend—wind, rain and sunshine; it is understood and acknowledged. The fundamental postulate of landlord legislation is declared to be a blunder. That Statesman whose whole public career, from the day that he first tied himself to the chariot-wheels of the Orange ascendancy, to the hour when he declared it to be sound political economy to “buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest;”—whose whole career has been a series of reluctant concessions, grudging retractations, and forced, tardy half-conversions; that Statesman who always looks one way and moves another, and whose only unviolated pledge as yet is the pledge to sliding scales, and slippery averages, with details indeterminate—declared on the 24th of February last year, that “it is impossible to fix the price of food by any legislative enactment”—declared this at the very moment that he was making a law whose professed aim was to keep the price of corn between 54*s.* and 58*s.* There is the fallacy renounced, repudiated—at the very instant that it is taken for the basis of a legislative act; an admitted absurdity, a confessed impossibility is selected, after six months’ anxious meditation, as the groundwork of a great political fabric. Will this last?—this tinkering up of the legislation of Deity, this meddling, by

tricky Acts of Parliament, with the beautiful, divine simplicity of Nature and natural law. Nature, science, commerce, civilization, have resources for preventing sudden and ruinous fluctuations of price. Widen the field from which you draw your supplies, depend not on one climate but on all climates, let casual deficiencies here be compensated by casual superfluities there—this is Nature's "system of averages:" but Sir Robert Peel and Nature are not of the same mind. It will not last: the ministerial architect proclaims to the world the rottenness of his own foundation: "it is impossible to fix the price of food by any legislative enactment."

How much we had used to hear once about the *importance of the agricultural interest*, meaning by "agricultural interest," the rental of owners of arable land; the importance of the agricultural interest; the dependence of national prosperity on landlords getting great rents; the national need of cherishing and coddling the rent-interest, as the great payer of taxes, the parent and benefactor of all other interests. Well! all this is settled, done with,—gone to the bottomless pit of detected and exploded lies. Within the memory of the youngest man living, we have made two sets of experiments on this question of the connexion between the rent-interest and the commercial, manufacturing and fiscal prosperity of the country:—and each time, with results which no man living can forget. These results are nowhere more lucidly expressed than in a quarter where it must be allowed one must not always look for verities—in royal speeches. On the 24th of February 1835, King William opened Parliament with congratulations on "*the satisfactory state of the trade and commerce of the country, AND OF THE PUBLIC REVENUE,*" at the same time "deeply lamenting that *the agricultural interest continued in a state of great depression.*" And on the 4th of February 1836, we find his Majesty addressing Parliament thus:—

"*The state of the commerce and manufactures of the United Kingdom is* HIGHLY SATISFACTORY. I lament that any class of my subjects should still suffer distress; and the difficulties which continue to be felt in important branches of agriculture may deserve your inquiry."

So that it appears, according to the royal judgment, commerce and manufactures and the public revenue may be in a "highly satisfactory state," while the "agricultural interest remains in a state of great depression."

Since 1836, the experiment has been tried the other way. We have had six years of high rents—thriving agricultural interest, jubilant bread-taxry. And those six years have been years of commercial and manufacturing distress and financial deficit, bankruptcy, pauperism, and national atrophy,—reacting, in the end, in the shape of diminished power of consumption, on the great rent-interest itself. Another fallacy exploded; another cheat found out and marked, so that all men may know it again; another truth forced into universal recognition. On the 3rd of April 1840, Sir Robert Peel begged to assure the landowners that "their best friends were the manufacturers, and that the manufactures of the country, and not the Corn-Laws, were the main element of their prosperity and of the value of their land." And no later back than last November, we had one of the present monopolist majority (Mr. Escott) indoctrinating his agricultural constituents with the discovery that "if ever a death blow is to be struck at the agriculture of England, it will be when the trade and commerce of the country have suffered an irreparable decline." Now these ministerial and landlord *dicta*, however unimportant in themselves as authorities, however unreliable as indications of purpose, have their value as showing that *an impression has been made*, that the country has not been stirred in vain. They mark the height to which the tide of opinion has risen. These admissions—reluctant and extorted admissions—of the representatives of the monopoly power, are signs that monopoly is shaken, and are invitations to all honest men to join hearts and hands to shake it down;—they seal the condemnation, and prophesy the swift and sure extinction of that system of monopolist legislation which is based on the assumption of the flat opposite. Here is progress: the question is advanced, and the power that has brought it thus far will carry it further. When we remember that the same man, who in 1840

assured the landlords, that "the manufactures of the country, and not the Corn-Laws, were the main element of their prosperity, and of the value of their land"—that this same man had said, in 1839, that the result of abandoning the Corn-Laws would be "a dull succession of enormous manufacturing towns, connected by railways intersecting the abandoned tracts which it would no longer be profitable to cultivate,"—when we put these two utterances together, we have not only a true measure of the intellect and morality of the man who just now nominally rules this country—we have the measure also of the advance of another and a higher power that *rules him*, and compared with which all prime ministers and landlord majorities, with their speeches and votes, their inane pomposities and tricky plausibilities, are but as so much weed swayed hither and thither by the ocean tides.

Another of these extinct fallacies is that of the connexion between the *price of bread* and the *rate of wages*. How we used to hear it reiterated, to very nausea, that if bread went down, wages would go down with it,—if bread rose, wages would rise too. It seems scarcely credible, but so it is: not more than eight years ago, a select Parliamentary Committee, the Committee of 1835, on the case of the Hand-Loom Weavers, broached this intolerable absurdity: the report of that committee discountenanced the repeal of the Corn-Laws, lest it should *lower the wages of hand-loom weaving*. We have now seen the end of this. The inane sophism—the impudent and audacious hoax, rather—has done its work, and is no more for this world. Facts have blown it all to atoms. In 1835, corn was under 40s.; since then it has been above 80s.: but *what man's wages have been at any time in all his life double what they were in 1835?* Amazing the audacity that could ever utter this paradox, and yet more amazing the stupidity that could ever believe it. It is just saying that the more bread there is in the country, the less will be every man's share,—and the less there is to divide, the greater will be the dividend. The fact is (as every man sees at a glance who thinks, and as a hard experience has hammered

it into the heads of those who cannot or will not think,) the rate of wages—in other words, the price of labour—depends, like the price of every thing else, on the proportion between the supply of labour and the demand for it. Wages rise, as a Lancashire operative once tersely put it, when two masters are looking after one man, and they fall when two men are looking after one master.

This wages-fallacy may be said to have died a natural death. The next which I have to mention, we may rather say has been put to death; at least it has been so battered that it may fairly be regarded as in a hopelessly moribund condition. I allude to the fallacy of there being *peculiar burdens of taxation pressing on the landowners*, entitling them to a monopoly by way of equivalent. The answer has been given over and over again, “If there are such peculiar burdens, take them off, and equalise taxation; or pension the landowners;—do any thing rather than make bread hard to come by.” And a very good answer this is, supposing the assumption of peculiar burdens to be valid in point of fact. One of the many salutary results of this agitation, however, has been that the assumed fact has been more and more questioned, and suspected to be no fact at all. The assertion of peculiar landlord burdens has led to the investigation of some peculiar landlord *frauds*, and of a host of peculiar landlord *exemptions*; and the probability is, that as the agitation grows older, we shall hear somewhat less of the peculiar burdens affecting the agricultural interest. It is coming now to be more and more generally known (in consequence of the efforts made by that National Anti-Corn-Law League which is our best Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,) that the landlords have taken care of themselves in the matter of taxation, as in other things; that of the alleged peculiar burdens on the landowners, some are not burdens on them at all—as the *tithe*, which never was theirs since the days of Offa, king of Mercia, which no man of them ever inherited or bought, which is the State’s reserved fund for spiritual and educational uses; that others, as the *malt-tax*, are borne by the consumer; that others, as the *poor-rates*,

are not peculiar to the owners of arable land, but fall on the whole immoveable property of the country—that in others, as the *land-tax*, (which was originally a commutation for feudal suit and service,) a direct fraud has been committed, by which the proceeds of the tax, which ought to be 8,000,000*l.* annually, are kept down at 2,000,000*l.* :—while, with all this, the landlord power has secured to itself a number of fiscal exemptions and immunities, great and small. Land devised by will bears no probate duty; land inherited by succession pays no legacy duty. The farmers, too, are protected and exempted at every point, from little fiscal charges, to strengthen them to bear the one great rent charge. The farmer rides an untaxed horse, drives an untaxed gig, looks through untaxed windows, and sleeps under a roof of untaxed tiles, insured from fire by an untaxed policy, and guarded from depredators by an untaxed dog. The fallacy of “peculiar burdens on land,” needing to be countervailed by landlord monopoly, has pretty well done its work: we hear less of it as the agitation grows older: occasionally it is paraded for exhibition along with the other bucolic curiosities at agricultural meetings, but it is not often brought out for active field service.

The fallacy of *independence of foreigners* is going, or gone, the same way. Of the stupendous absurdity of this vaunted independence—the independence of starvation and wretchedness—the independence of voluntary poverty and famine—the independence of a sour and surly barbarism—I do not speak now; I simply advert to it as a fallacy which the progress of events, the bitter, hard experience of the last few years, has so utterly stripped bare, ripped open, and turned inside out, that no human creature can ever be taken in by it again. “Independence of foreigners!” when every child knows that for the raw material of our staple manufactures, for the cordage of our navy, for the commodities of daily use and comfort that give us our revenue—for all that makes us a country—we are dependent on foreign powers already: dependent on jealous and suspicious foreign powers. “Independence of foreigners!” Why, for the last four

years, we have consumed two millions and a half of quarters of foreign wheat annually; that is to say, two millions and a half of the population of this country are dependent for their existence on foreign corn; dependent, not on those products of a natural and healthy commerce which would come in as they were wanted, and when they were wanted, but on such chance supplies as we can pick up in a hurry when nobody is prepared for our demand, and can get huddled over at the lucky moment, in time for consumption before the scale slides again. "Independence of foreigners!" Have we forgotten, any of us, what happened three years ago, as a direct consequence of the monopoly that is to make us independent; when the Bank of England had to sue, cap in hand, of French capitalists, *for a loan to save it from stopping?* "Independence of foreigners!" This stupidity is at an end; we need no more spend strength in beating this phantom. The fact of dependence is confessed, the doctrine of dependence is openly avowed, as the basis of future legislation, by the highest monopoly authorities. Their own Quarterly Review tells us that no one now "is sanguine enough to suppose that the increased supply from the British soil has been at all proportionable to the increased demand," and asks—

"Whence are the *four or five millions* of additional mouths that have grown upon us since 1821 to be fed? 'Art,' says the sage, 'is long—life is short!' Can we wait for the slow experiments of the Davys and Liebig's? Here are the people swarming upon us! And will any rational man—be he farmer or be he landlord—say that we should not endeavour to create increased facilities for meeting an increased deficiency?"

All the old pleas by which the landlord monopoly used to be bolstered up, have received their *quietus* in the controversy of these last three years. They are all going, going, and will soon be gone. The cry used to be *protection to the farmer*. This will not hold together much longer. Farmers are fast finding out, under the tuition of the experience that teaches even fools, that the protection they truly want is protection from their own landlords; protection from that power of the screw, the political screw and the money screw,

with which the landlord monopoly crushes them into serfdom and pauperism; protection from the fluctuations and uncertainties of the sliding scale; protection from the changes and chances of a legislation under which they have had to complain to Parliament of "unparalleled distress" *five times over* within twenty-five years. With such teachers from their own ranks as Mr. Hope, (whose Essay on "Agriculture and the Corn-Law" will soon be in the hands of every elector in Great Britain,) the process of farmer-conversion must go on surely, and not slowly. The doctrine of "protection to farmers" is on the wane. Their own landlords have been busy at the work of conversion. At one agricultural meeting after another, within these last few months, we have had the Mileses, and Escotts, and Aclands, giving excellent Anti-Corn-Law Lectures, (unsalaried by the League,) throwing the farmer on his own resources, teaching him that not to protection any longer must he look, but to his own energies,—and that diminished protection must be compensated by improved and more scientific cultivation. Landlords may find it convenient to forget these things now, and shrink from the spirit they have evoked—but that spirit is not to be laid so easily; the ice is broken, the wedge is in, the prestige of security and inviolableness that hedged round monopoly and protected protection, is dissipated. Events are teaching the farmers—the best men of their own body are teaching them—their own landlords, and the head of the landlord Ministry, and the acts of the landlord Parliament are teaching them that the doom of protection is sealed, and that to lean on protection any longer is to lean on a broken reed.

The present state of the question is distinctly and strongly unfavourable to all compromises, expedients and half-measures. The question is not any more between sliding scale and moderate fixed duty—moderate fixed injustice and impolicy—but between restriction and freedom, between monopoly and justice, between taxed bread and untaxed bread. We have got past the half-way halting-house of fixed duty. The more the fixed duty is looked at, the stronger the objections against it, and the weaker the pleas for it. As a

protective duty it is unjust, a piece of the old monopoly, tainted with the *virus* of class legislation. As a revenue duty it is mischievous and absurd; mischievous as being a tax on bread—absurd as being an inefficient, bungling, wasteful bread-tax. If bread is to be taxed for revenue, let *all* bread yield a revenue. Let there be a bread-excise; an excise taken at every mill, on every quarter of wheat ground: easily and cheaply levied it would be, and immensely productive. But to lay a duty on importation would be to raise the price on *all* the bread eaten by the people, in order to extract a revenue out of *that part* of the people's bread only which happens to be made of foreign corn. The entire quantity of wheat consumed annually in Great Britain is, in round numbers, about twenty millions of quarters. Of these twenty millions, upwards of two millions and a half are of foreign importation. Suppose, then, an 8*s.* or a 5*s.* duty on this imported wheat, we enhance the price of *all* wheat, we make the consumer pay a tax on all bread—but of this enhanced price, this tax, only that portion goes into the national treasury which is paid on the two millions and a half of quarters imported:—the tax on the remaining seventeen millions and a half is pocketed by the landlords. Whether for protection, which is a robbery—or for revenue, which is a blunder—the notion of moderate fixed duty is fast taking its place with the rest of the exploded Corn-Law fallacies. The tide of conversion from monopoly sets in, not to fixed duty, but to freedom: the partisans of fixed duty are daily diminishing in number, drafted off into the ranks of total repeal—total and *immediate* repeal. Even the notion of a temporary duty, to prevent a farmers' panic, and work out the change from restriction to freedom gradually—even this is losing its advocates. The time for it is passed: the farmers *have had* their panic, and have stood it, all things considered, wonderfully well. At all recent farmers' meetings—in their own farmer newspaper, the *Mark Lane Express*—we find multiplying and strengthening expressions of the desire for a *settlement*, on whatever terms (so that it *be* a settlement), and of a determination to substitute skill, energy, and agricultural improve-

ment, for a monopoly protection which is already loosened, and in whose prolonged continuance, under any form, no man of them has faith. The uncertainty, the suspense, the unsettlement—the feeling that all existing arrangements are but provisional and temporary—*this* is the real “panic :” and whatever settlement is quite sure of being a settlement, a basis on which they can build their future operations, a point from which they can start afresh with confidence and certainty, knowing what they have to do and what they have to expect, would be infinitely better for the farmers (and they are daily coming round to see and acknowledge that it would be better) than any more modifications which would by and by have to be re-modified, than the delusive, half-and-half fixed duty which every man knows would presently be unfixed again. The true way out of panic is the way into justice : the justice of absolute, impartial and perfect commercial liberty.

This is the present state of the question between agricultural monopoly and free trade. Monopoly stands yet ; but it stands with weakened defences, on shaken and loosened foundations : every plea of right, necessity or utility on which it stands is formally repudiated and ignored. All that ragged regiment of sophisms, fallacies and mystifications, which used to make its body-guard, has been routed again and again, and is in process of being officially disbanded. All fogs and mists are cleared or clearing away ; and now we stand face to face with the plain, bare, naked, unmystified question, Shall we be the thralls of the oligarchy any more ? shall the life-blood of this mighty British people be sucked any longer by the horse-leech of monopoly, that cries, Give, give, and never says, It is enough. The monopolists are uncertain, confused, dumfounded, know not what they would do, nor what they should say. As the *Times* wittily and truly drew their likeness some months back, they are—

“Hampered, cowed, afraid to speak out, or get straight to the subject, they find that somehow or other, they cannot quite tell why, the old class of arguments are to be hustled away ; their best friends all tell them they must

hold their tongues; it won't do any longer; they can't quite understand why or how it is that times are so much changed—indeed, nobody tells them, but so it is; the question is ruled against them; some of them must say something, but they are told that they must leave off saying what they used to say, and they don't know yet what else to be at."

In Parliament it is so with them; in the country it is the same. They preach free-trade doctrines one day; get lectured and scolded by their own press for desertion on the next; and recant and explain on the third. *The argument is over.* There is no argument. We cannot get up any argument. They give us nothing to argue about; the monopoly minister looks round on the monopolist majority that made him minister, with infinite coolness and complacency, and says, "I believe that on the general principle of free trade there is now no great difference of opinion, and that we all agree in the general rule that we should purchase in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest." There is no argument. Monopoly will not, cannot, dare not argue; has not one single point or principle to stand on. The whole question is in one great and glorious unsettlement. The Corn-Law has been thrown into what Sir Robert Peel calls the "Lottery of Legislation," and we have all drawn one universal blank. No human creature dreams of its finality. Every man with eyes in his head sees there is no finality,—there can be none. They whine and whimper, and beg for *ten years' trial*—only ten years. "Ten years' trial!"—it will not get two years' trial; it was tried, convicted and condemned before it was born,—condemned by fourteen years' trial of slides and averages,—condemned by the lips of the very nurses that cradled the sickly, hateful abortion, the unclean progeny of bribery and lies.

This is the state of the question as regards the monopolists:—all uncertainty and unsettlement: their old opinions disavowed, their old reliances shaken, the ground they stand on all hollowed out under their feet. How stands it with the free-traders the while? What mistakes have *they* made? From what positions have they been driven? Where are the sulky, coward concessions they have had to make? All

their prophecies have come true, point by point. All their principles have successively advanced, from being the speculations of the solitary student, into legislative recognition and partial legislative application. Free trade is in office, though free traders are in opposition. The wisdom of the Smiths, the Says, the Mills and Ricardos, has come forth from the closet of the philosopher, and now cries aloud in the streets and lifts up its voice in all places of public concourse: the broadest free-trade truths are proclaimed by the minister of monopoly, and await only their honest application; and the mighty LEAGUE of England's bravest and wisest, with voice of thunder and a thousand arms that reach to the remotest hamlet of the land, keeps pouring into monopoly's hosts a steady, ceaseless, raking fire of facts and arguments, making the land ring again with the cry for justice.

No wavering, no halting, no falling short is here. Every step is a success, and every success is sure. Not an event in our commercial history and legislation but realises a free-trade prediction, or embodies a free-trade principle. All our prophecies come true. At the very hour the Corn-Law of 1815 passed, with the walls of the monopolist parliament guarded with fixed bayonets, it was met by that admirable Grenville protest, containing the memorable sentence, "Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty." And we have found monopoly the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty. Every line and syllable of that protest has come most exactly and completely true. I do not know that a single fact has turned up in all the history of this question yet, that has found the free-traders tripping. I have here a selection, made by Mr. Cobden, of extracts from the works of that man to whom we all owe so much, who was instant and urgent in his advocacy of free trade, at a time when free-trade advocacy was out of season, and who, now that it is in season, comes in again to finish the monopoly monster and be in at the creature's death—that writer of the ready wit, the iron logic, and the fervid eloquence, the exploder of fallacies and the render of sophisms, to whose "Catechism on the Corn-Laws" (or Honest Man's

Daily Companion, we may call it) so many of us owe our first and best lessons in political economy,—I have here a selection of extracts from the works of Colonel Perronet Thompson; and the very first thing I find in these extracts is the following prophecy:—

“So long as the necessities of the State can be supplied without any remarkable alteration in the present mode of collection, the Corn-Laws may have a chance to stand. But the first necessity for any change will probably bring them in ruins upon the heads of the monopolists. For instance, the first proposal of a Property-Tax—which is a thing already whispered as possible—would set all who have property on the discovery that the *Property-Tax was only a subscription to maintain the landlords in an unjust gain*. It is in fact totally incredible, that any nation would acquiesce in the imposition of a Property-Tax, when the whole necessity and demand for such an infliction arose out of the determination of the dominant party to lay restraints upon the industry of the country.”—*Westminster Review*, 1st July, 1829.

That prediction seems in a pretty fair way of fulfilment.

I look on a few pages, and find the following:—

“The truth is, we must wait till hunger brings our people to their colours, and some time or other we shall have a fair stand-up fight, to know whether we are to continue to be the born thralls of the owners of the soil or not. Our Saxon ancestors wore it written on a ring about their necks; we wear it in an Act of Parliament. But we are a long way from the time yet; there must be thousands more of bankruptcies, and myriads of the wives and children of the working classes must die of hunger or over-work in factories, that a greater quantity of the produce of their industry may be given to the landlords for a bushel of corn. We are in the state of raising statues to any Tory man who will offer to limit our working hours if we, on our parts, will assist him to keep up the oppression that creates the inducement to over-work; and half our people might be persuaded to turn against the individual who should tell them it was an invention of the enemy. But this will mend; misery and the progress of information will alter it. I look to the last, however, most. The working classes, at least in these southern parts, have proved themselves unequal to the question. *It will be when the capitalists and employers find out where they are hurt, that the real resistance will begin.*”—*Letters of a Representative*, 1st July, 1837.

The time has come. The capitalists and employers have “found out where they are hurt,” and the real resistance has begun. We have got the financial deficit; we have got the Income-Tax “subscription to maintain the landlords in an unjust gain;” we have had the thousands of bankruptcies,

and the myriads of women and children dead of over-work to buy monopoly bread—(not in factories only, by the way; well for them they have had the factories—better factory work and wages than the life-in-death of rural serfdom and seven shillings a-week):—we have had these things, the curse has worked, the hour is come, and the men are come to do the hour's work.

How this agitation has grown and grown upon us, since that 13th day of December, 1838, when the Manchester Chamber of Commerce first met, to "take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the repeal of the existing Corn-Laws!" Manchester men meet for something else now than to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning. How it has grown upon us! bigger and bigger, louder and louder. We all remember how, for some two years and more, the allegations of present, and the predictions of coming distress were scouted by the Statesman who now for a while seems to rule us; "predictions without argument" they were, "apprehensions not sustained by official returns." Then the distress was softened down and explained away. It was temporary; or it was partial; or it was exaggerated;—the Savings' Banks returns, and the Custom-House export returns, showed that there ought to be great prosperity. And then, when there was no denying it, they began "accounting" for it. It was the joint stock banks; it was monetary pressure; it was over-production; it was *machinery*. It was this thing, and that thing, it was every thing rather than the famine-law. At last it was found out and confessed that the accounts of distress were *frightfully accurate*: "frightfully accurate"—and they tinkered it up with a new sliding scale, and income-tax to match.

Year by year have we been repulsed from the door of the Legislature—our prayers for inquiry rejected, our allegations of distress disbelieved, our complaints of wrong scouted. And yet year by year this agitation has gone on, widening and deepening; gathering force, intensity and volume; drawing two ministries into its vortex; making a monopoly premier enunciate free-trade aphorisms as good as if they were

culled out of the columns of the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular*; driving the monopoly cabinet, with all its thundering majority, into concessions and mutations which, though settling nothing well, have the next best merit of well unsettling every thing:—and on it rolls still—mighty, majestic, resistless—the swelling tide of reason and of right—a nation’s demand for justice, a nation’s prayer to the great God of justice, “Give us—oh! give us our daily bread.”

England—says Shakspeare’s old John of Gaunt, breathing his last in prophetic denunciation of reckless and selfish misgovernment, which—

. “Insatiate cormorant,
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself”—

England—

. “This land of such dear souls,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leas’d out
Like to a tenement, or pelting farm:
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of wat’ry Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds.”

Please God, we’ll wipe the inky blots clean, and rend the rotten parchment bonds.

LECTURE II.

MONDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 1843.

THE IMMORALITIES OF THE CORN-LAW MONOPOLY.

"MUCH has been said"—it was some time ago remarked by the author of the Catechism on the Corn-Laws—"much has been said of the Jacobinism of the *poor against the rich*, but very little of the Jacobinism of the *rich against the poor*; though the one is only matter of speculation and alarm, and the other meets every man three times a-day when he sits down to eat." We may demur, I think, to the verbal accuracy of this way of stating the case;—the question not being exactly between the rich and the poor, but between the drones and the workers, whether rich or poor; between privileged and titled idleness, and unprivileged, plebeian industry. The ranks of the Bread Monopoly include some not inconsiderable amount of pauperism and insolvency (if my Lord of Mountcashel tells the truth), and it is the active and producing wealth of the country, and not its poverty, on which monopolists prey. With this qualification, we may thank our friend the Catechiser for a most wholesome Anti-Corn-Law text; and may please ourselves with the thought that the longer this Anti-Corn-Law discussion lasts, the likelier it is that the omission he laments may be rectified, and that the Jacobinical, violent, thievish character of the spoliation which power and privilege perpetrate on honest men's industry will be stripped bare, ripped open, and shown up, so that all men may know it.

It is of this that I have to speak to you this evening; of

the "Immoralities of the Corn-Law Monopoly." The mischiefs with which that monopoly is fraught to all our economical and social interests as a nation, the way in which it is eating like a canker into the heart of England's wealth and strength—I shall have other opportunities of examining with you. I deal with it now, not as a blunder, but as a fraud; not as a mistake in economics, but as a crime in morals; not as erroneous political economy, but as false and wicked political morality. And I confess I am more desirous that you should see and feel this, than I am to multiply statistical facts and figures, showing how it bears on your individual or class interests. The facts and figures illustrative of the mischievousness of monopoly constitute an important element of the controversy, but it seems to me beginning at the wrong end to start with them. Of course the Bread Monopoly is mischievous: all iniquity is mischievous; and thank God that it is—or its reign would be long in the world. Of course it is mischievous; and let the mischief be shown, again and again, in all its kinds and degrees and ramifications, till no human creature can mistake it. But then how is it that we ever came to endure the mischief, but that we were blind, from the beginning, to the immorality which is its root? All the wide-wasting woes and miseries of the last five years; the pauperism, the bankruptcy, the starvation, the civil commotion and the military bloodshedding; the decay of national strength, the loss of national capital, the decline of national resource and revenue—these are not the disease; they are but the symptoms and effects of the disease. The root of the evil is moral. It lies in a legislative iniquity and fraud which a sound and true public morality would have frowned out of countenance from the very first, without waiting very curiously to see what harm would come of it. I believe what we mainly want now, to root out the landlord monopoly, is not so much elaborate statistical demonstrations of its workings, as a clear moral perception, and strong moral feeling of its radically base and guilty character. We must tell them they are *robbing* us: we must ring it into their ears that their monopoly is DISHONEST: and while we cry aloud

for cheap bread, free trade, open markets, extension of commerce and manufactures, the ground-note of all must be the demand for right and justice.

The "Immoralities of the Corn-Law Monopoly." A somewhat perplexing subject this is, to know how and where to begin upon, when it is all one immorality together: but perhaps we may put first, as the head and front of the whole offence, that this monopoly is a *selfish and sordid abuse of the powers of legislation and government*. The Corn-Law has this broad, glaring brand-mark on the very face of it—that it is a law made not for public, but for private uses. It is a law for filling the particular pockets of the law-makers. They may gloss it over as they will, with all the stale and stupid cant about protection to the farmer, independence of foreigners, and the like: no man living is deceived by it; they are not deceived themselves. The reality glares through all this mockery and make-believe. The long and the short of it is, as every human creature with intellect one remove from idiocy perfectly well knows, the Corn-Law is meant for *this*, and only this—to make the people's bread dear that legislators' rents may be high. This is the fact; confessed with shame by the best of them, avowed without shame by others. The excellent Earl Fitzwilliam, in one of his Addresses to the Landowners of England, says, "The painful confession must be made, that our own benefit is the true object for which this obnoxious code is established." A Cabinet Minister (Sir Edward Knatchbull) informed the world, in last year's debate, that monopoly is necessary "to enable the landed gentry to maintain their station in society," (to enable them, I suppose, to pay turnpike tolls, like gentry of humbler pretensions;) and it was but the week before last that the Earl of Mountcashel avowed, at a meeting of his own convening, that the object of the Corn-Law is to enable men who have muddled away their own property to make a living by taxing other men's industry. English landowning legislators use their legislative function to take money out of other people's pockets, and put it into their own. These men make public

laws with a view to their own private incomes: they enact artificial famine, in order to screw out of the agony and bloody sweat of hungry men's toil the means of maintaining their station in society, and saving their mortgaged estates from the auctioneer's hammer.

Of their own food, these privileged and titled plunderers are somewhat more careful. Until the recent alteration in the tariff—when decorum was the order of the day, and a very little was surrendered that the rest might be retained—there were some sorts of foreign-grown food absolutely prohibited in this country, and there were certain other sorts of foreign-grown food absolutely free of all duty whatever. It is instructive to compare these two categories. The prohibited eatables were oxen, cows, calves, pigs, sheep and lambs: the duty-free eatables were *live turbot, turtles and lobsters*: and one of the very first acts of the present Ministry was a Treasury minute of the 2nd of October, 1841, ordering “that preserved turtle should be admitted on the same terms as live turtle.” It took Sir Robert Peel half a year to consider whether a starving people should have bread to eat: but the great man's great mind grappled nobly with the question of preserved turtle, and relieved the distress of aristocratic palates by a bold and brilliant *coup d'état*.

Now is it any wonder that society in Britain is sick and fevered, with this poison, this plague-boil of selfish and sordid legislation fermenting and festering at the heart of it? Is it in human nature to bear honour to an authority whose very sources are polluted thus foully? Shall men love the authority that taxes, for selfish ends, every bit of bread they put into their mouths? or obey, with other than the obedience of fear, rulers who use their legislative power to make a purse? It is among the worst wrongs man can do to man—this twisting of the powers of government and legislation to private uses. Those powers, so great and god-like, so vast and varied in the good and the evil which they may do or undo; so sacred in the responsibility that attends them; the power of regulating the actions, contracting or expanding the enjoyments, declaring and securing the rights,

forming, by laws and institutions, the characters of the millions of human creatures that in their aggregation constitute a community, a people—are *these* powers to trade and make money with? The powers of legislation are like a portion of divine prerogative, delegated in trust; and they ought to be wielded with a large impartiality of view, a transparent disinterestedness of purpose, a serene, passionless justice, akin to that with which Deity rules worlds. Any the slightest admixture of personal and private aims in the discharge of this high public trust; any diversion of legislative power to ends of individual interest, is a crime of the first magnitude against society. It is treason to the community. It destroys the very idea of *community*. That is not a community in which such things are done, but a mere juxtaposition of distinct castes held artificially together by force and fear. To think of men making money for themselves under show of governing and legislating for a people! It is not legislation: it is not government; it is neither more nor less than larceny.

The bread-monopoly has a certain thievish taint upon it. It is an aggression, by the rights of property, on the rights of labour;—of labour, which is older than property,—which is the basis and foundation of all property-rights—which confers on property, by a derivative and borrowed title, all the sacredness it has or can have. Of course, you will not understand me to mean that there is anything naturally antagonistic between these two rights, of property and labour; it is only dishonest legislation that creates the antagonism. Each of these rights is definite and intelligible: it is only when the one assails the other, and thereby makes itself a wrong, that either is imperilled. By the rights of property or ownership, as applied to land, I understand the right which the landowner has to the exclusive possession of a particular portion of the soil of a country, on which no man may come without his consent, and of the produce of which no man may take any part without paying to him such equivalent as he may be willing to accept. This is the property-right,—clear, tangible and definite; a derivative, conven-

tional right, indeed—(except when representative of the labour of the individual proprietor) : yet a right still, whose conservation is among the first objects of society and government. And the rights of labour are definite and definable, too : they consist in the freedom of the labourer to work in his own way, and on terms of his own approval, and to exchange the fruits of his labour, at his own price, in the best market he can find. These are the rights of ownership and of labour ; and the business of society and law is to protect each in all its entirety—to give security of enjoyment to the one, and freedom of production to the other,—security and freedom of exchange to both : and every infringement of the one on the other is a wrong, an act of spoliation and Jacobinism.

Now this Jacobinism is precisely what our monopolists are guilty of : they are not contented with their property-right ; they must go picking and stealing out of the labour-right. They assert, loudly and lustily enough, their own inviolableness of possession, and their own freedom of exchange : they refuse freedom of exchange to labour, bind labour over to exchange with them at their price. One would think they had not much temptation to this. One would think their ownership-right might be enough for them, without trying to make it more by plunder. Of all classes of human beings on this earth, it were hard to find one so privileged by circumstance and position as are the hereditary landowners of England. To be lord of the soil in a land like this ; to have and to hold in perpetuity the secured, indefeasible fruition of the wealth and beauty of broad English acres—parks, pleasure-grounds, gardens, meadows and corn-fields, none daring or desiring to make them afraid ; to have the power of disposing of the soil's produce, on their own terms, in a market ever close at hand—a market in which they have the natural monopoly of vicinage, and the natural protection of the whole cost of bringing over, at a profit, the produce of other soils—a market, too, which by no possibility can ever be glutted, in which the demand always outruns any supply which they can put in, and in which customers are increasing at the rate

of about a thousand a-day—to own land in a country like England, without work or labour done for it, the value of this land being daily increased, while they sleep, with the increase of population, the extension of commerce, the facilitation of intercourse, and the general advance of civilization,—one would think this might be enough to content any men. Never was a social *status*, in all this world, combining a greater number and variety of felicitous accidents, which no man grudges them or dreams of taking from them. They have nothing to do but look on while other people are doing, and their rents grow as surely as their trees grow, while they fold their hands. One would think this enough to content any men. But no!—this is not enough; this does not content them; they cry for more. They must invade the rights of industry; they must filch a per-centage out of the earnings of laborious poverty, and the profits of laboriously accumulated and skilfully expended capital. They must tack on to their property-right a right of levying black mail on other men's industry. They say: "We will do what we will with our own, but you shall not do what you will with your own; you shall not carry the produce of your toil where you will, to exchange it for what you can; you shall come to us, and exchange with us. No matter what may be your skill, your ingenuity, your science, your industry; no matter what may be your natural and acquired facilities for producing commodities of use and ornament, in exchange for which the owners and occupiers of other soils would be glad and grateful to be allowed to feed you; no matter how many millions, or thousands of millions of acres, all over the length and breadth of God's earth, may be waiting to feed you from the plenteousness of their unexhausted fertility; no matter how thankful their ill-clad, ill-housed cultivators would be to give you food in exchange for what you have to give them,—we say it shall not be; you and they shall not exchange; you shall not have corn grown for you on other soils than ours; you may build ships to bring you bread from afar, while your warehouses are stored to bursting with the goods that are to freight

them, but you shall not eat the bread when it comes; you shall work for us, and buy of us; you shall eat our bread at our price, or you may go starve; you Jacobins, you levellers, you destructives, you insolent, over-producing cotton lords, you swinish multitude."

Why, what is this but slavery? It is downright man-stealing; it is taxing men's nerves and sinews, their blood, their life, to work without previous contract, and without subsequent equivalent—to work twelve hours for the bread that might be got in eight hours. And the men that do this have the face to talk, virtuously and humanely, with genuine Pecksniff virtue and humanity, of *infant slavery in factories*. Why, it is their own iniquitous law that makes the infant slaves. It is they that doom tender, growing childhood to tasks unfit for childhood, by enacting that the parents' toil shall not be enough to earn the children's bread: it is they that make infants slave in factories, by legislating that there shall be no alternative except infant labour or infant starvation: they are the Jacobins, the destructives, the spoliators. Not with gentle and gingerly supplication should we stand before these men, soliciting them to please be so good as spare a little of their lordly and ministerial attention to facts and figures, official returns and statistical calculations; but with honest, open-mouthed indignation, thundering in their ears, till every echo in the land joins chorus, that divine mandate on which all society is based—*THOU SHALT NOT STEAL*.

"A heaven for lords is Britain," sings our Corn-Law Rhymer, with feelings "hammered till they are *cold-short*," and can no longer bend in courtesy, but "snap, and fly off in sarcasm"—

" 'A heaven for lords is Britain,'
The land of toil and famine;
In England men work hard for scorn,
In Ireland men are clamming.
If hell itself were Britain,
Could worse than this be said?
If devils were lords in England,
They could but tax our bread.

- " Toil'd England ! breadless Erin !
 Your spoilers prate of Poland !
 They talk of Russia's aced slaves,
 To helots who have no land !
 They could but starve their feeders,
 And call the fetter'd free,
 If the knout were Britain's sceptre,
 Abhorr'd from sea to sea !
- " In hopeless pain we labour
 For more saints than Saint Monday ;
 We toil for scorn six days in seven,
 And Agnew's bill for Sunday.
 If William's the Reformer,
 Can this be truly said ?
 The Devil's not King of England,
 And yet they tax our bread !
- " There's bread enough for Britain,
 Had Britain leave to barter ;
 We're free to make, but not to sell !
 Is this great William's charter ?
 Or have the Rodens changed him
 For Graham's soft woollen head ?
 If Peel were king of England,
 He could but tax our bread."

What an enormous immorality it is—when one looks at it with simple, unsophisticated mind—*this legislating against food !* These people really seem as if they had a sort of horror and hatred of food. They are in arms against plenty. They fear much bread ; they abominate abundance of meat. We have this on their own showing of their own case. It is the drift, the point of all the monopolist argument, that, if it were not for monopoly, there would be more bread in the land than there is. This is their "case." We all remember Lord Stanley's famous Tamboff oration ; in which his Lordship showed how many millions of quarters of best wheat, cheap as an old song, would come rushing in upon us like a deluge, from one single province of Russia, the moment the monopoly should be abolished. The statistics of that oration have long since had their due : but what shall we say to the morality of it ? What does the argument mean, but that

much bread is a nuisance to be abated, and abundance of best wheat a curse to be averted, by dexterous and provident statesmanship. You recollect, probably, the curious turn which Parliamentary debate took, last year, in reference to the cattle item of the new tariff. There was Mr. Miles, as representative of the grand British oxen-and-hog interest, arguing that if the oxen-and-hog monopoly were relaxed, people would by and by be getting good meat at $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ a pound, *and therefore* the monopoly must be retained; to which the reply of the free-trading Ministerialists was, "Oh, no! they won't; don't be frightened; the French and German meat is very bad stuff, and not much of it; free-trade will do no harm, *therefore* let monopoly be relaxed."—I do not know how this may strike other minds—use and wont will enable one to stand almost anything: but, looking at it in a plain way, it appears to me about the most outrageously inhuman doctrine that was ever hatched in muddled brains and selfish hearts. Here are men claiming an interest in scarcity; a vested right in famine; a property in starvation. For what is it to prohibit food, but to say that food *is wanted*, and *shall not come*? The prohibition means that there is a demand here, and a supply ready to meet such demand there (else the prohibition were a sheer futility), but that demand and supply shall not meet. Actually, it has happened that under this wicked law human food has been *destroyed*. By a return made to the House of Commons, three years ago, it appears that since the enactment of the sliding scale of 1828, 2,330 quarters of wheat, 63 quarters of barley, 783 quarters of oats, 4 quarters of rye, 23 quarters of peas, 38 quarters of beans, 43 quarters of Indian corn, and 26 cwt. of flour, have been abandoned in bond (after having lain on hand spoiling, till they were not worth the cost of keeping)—and destroyed—*thrown into the Thames*—"under the inspection of the proper officers."

Our monopolists not only treat human food as though it were a mischief and a nuisance, but it has so happened that they have actually made it such. Allow me to read you an illustration of this working of monopoly. The volume I

have here (which is one every man ought to study who wishes to know what our Corn-Law has done and is doing) is entitled, "Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire," by Dr. W. Cooke Taylor. In these Notes, we find the following:—

"Our conversation then turned on America, and my companion mentioned two circumstances which I have since investigated, and found to be correct. Such a want of the materials of clothing is felt in the country along the Ohio and the Mississippi, that the inhabitants are obliged to have recourse to the most heterogeneous materials in order to make out a decent dress. This deficiency does not arise from any want of the means of purchasing our manufactures, but simply from the laws which prohibit our merchants from receiving the only payment which they have to offer. Last year they sent down so large a stock of pork, beef, and other provisions to New Orleans, that room could not be found for them in the stores. The barrels were piled on the quays; the fierce sun of Louisiana soon produced fermentation and corruption; the putrescent mass tainted the air, and greatly increased the mortality of the yellow fever, which annually visits that city; and thus, what would have been the means of life to Lancashire, became the source of death to New Orleans. Can we sufficiently admire a system of legislation whose most signal results are pestilence on the one side of the Atlantic and famine on the other;—nakedness in America, and starvation in England?"

And the people that do these things will ask their Maker to his face to "give us day by day our daily bread," and ripen for us the kindly fruits of the earth that we may enjoy them.

Monopoly commits the crime of forbidding man to serve man. It throws up a barrier between man and man. It interdicts human intercourse, lays an embargo on human sympathies, makes it a statutable offence to do good and communicate. With its absurd and savage dogma of independence of foreigners—a dogma which, if carried out to its full extent, would put an end to all commerce whatever, (for what is commerce with foreigners but dependence on foreigners, reciprocated by foreigners' dependence on us?)—a dogma which simply comes to this, that Providence somehow made a mistake in making the ocean navigable,—with this absurd and savage dogma of independence of foreigners, monopoly would nullify that benign arrangement of nature by which want here satisfies itself by exchanging with super-

fluity there, and diversities of soil, climate and production adjust themselves into a healthful and beneficent community. Monopoly says, this shall not be: want shall remain unsatisfied, and superfluity shall be superfluity still. Good meat shall breed fever and pestilence under the burning sun of Louisiana, and Manchester spinners shall work short time for short wages and no meat, through the cold of a Lancashire winter: the meat shall stay where it is not wanted, to putrefy, and the cotton fabrics shall stay where they are not wanted, to breed bankruptcy and pauperism: New Orleans shall have its fill of yellow fever, and Manchester shall have its atrophy and famine: Independence of foreigners for ever! and "Britons never shall be slaves."

Thus it is that the law of landlords counterworks the law of nature. Human legislation forbids that which divine legislation commands. Nature lays no interdict on human intercourse, puts no wall of brass between nation and nation: her benign and beautiful law is, that each shall serve all and be served by all. Landlord monopolists are of a different way of thinking. They say there shall be the brass wall (wickets being reserved for turtle, turbot and lobsters); man shall not serve man; human good shall not be reciprocated and diffused; hunger shall not weave for nakedness, neither shall nakedness grow food for hunger. At this very moment that I speak, there are tens of thousands of God's creatures in this land, writhing and struggling with want—able to work, willing to work, able and willing to work for the whole human race,—begging and praying for leave to work, yet no man hiring them; and there are millions of acres of land all over the earth, which the same God made that made this land of England—the dews descending on them by night, and the sun shining on them by day: there might be harvests getting ready for us there this moment, which we could buy with our million-handed industry and skill, and bring over in the ships that rot idly in our docks,—enough and to spare for us, every one. But no! it is not to be. Not for us is any part of all that teeming wealth of nature. Not for us does Providence send dews and sunshine. Not for us are harvests ripening

beyond the sea, in fresh virgin soils. Monopoly says, No! it shall not be: the loom shall lie idle here, and the plough shall lie idle there; the hungry shall still go hungry, and the naked shall still go naked; man shall not serve man.

How one feels the iniquity of this restrictive and prohibitory legislation, in view of such a picture as this (I read from Miss Martineau's "Society in America") :—

"The prospects of agriculture in the States north-west of the Ohio are brilliant. The stranger who looks upon the fertile prairies of Illinois and Indiana, and the rich alluvions of Ohio, feels the iniquity of the English Corn-Laws as strongly as in the alleys of Sheffield and Manchester. The inhuman perverseness of taxing food is there evident in all its enormity. The world ought never to hear of a want of food,—no one of the inhabitants of its civilized portions ought ever to be without the means of obtaining his fill, while the mighty western valley smiles in its fertility. If the aristocracy of England, for whom those laws were made, and by whom they are sustained, could be transported to travel, in open waggons, the boundless prairies, and the shores of the great rivers which would bring down the produce, they would groan to see from what their petty, selfish interests had shut out the thousands of half-starved labourers at home. If they could not be convinced of the very plain truth, of how their own fortunes would be benefited by allowing the supply and demand of food to take their natural course, they would, for the moment, wish their rent-rolls at the bottom of the sea, rather than that they should stand between the crowd of labourers and the supply of food which God has offered them."

Perhaps they would. In charity we may hope they would. Almost certainly some of them would. But as the probability of the English aristocracy going to see the American prairies is of too remote and shadowy a character to afford any solid *data* of calculation, we may be glad to remember that the practical solution of the question depends on agencies of a less conjectural quality than the spontaneous sympathies of monopolist legislators. Meanwhile we must allow that our traveller has drawn a picture which, however it may act on our organ of benevolence, may not be altogether unacceptable (as a picture) to that rude, primitive sense of justice, which, though rude, holds a corner in most honest men's hearts—the monopolist aristocracy of England "transported" beyond the seas, and their rent-rolls dropped by the way at the bottom of the Atlantic.

This bread-monopoly, with its alleged principle and rationale of independence of foreigners, is an enemy to civilization. It would, if it could, stop the world from growing. It seeks to hedge in and pare down this nation's wealth, population, power and greatness, to the measure of the food-producing resources of the acres of this small island; it blots out, as far as we are concerned, fruitful fields and profitable markets beyond the sea, as effectually as an earthquake would do it; it would smite whole tracts of earth with the curse of perpetual barrenness, and enact that Ocean shall roll on in eternal solitude—the great divider, instead of the uniter of nations. Men of London! merchants, traders, shippers, artisans, how like you this notion of independence of foreigners? There was a time when Britain was independent of foreigners: Britain was thus independent before London was built; and independent Britain was, without much difficulty, made a provincial dependency of Rome. To talk here in London of being independent of foreigners! Why, London never would have been, on the independent principle. The whole of this mighty metropolis—metropolis not of Britain only, but of the globe—with all the wealth, refinement, intelligence, civilization that are here garnered up, the accumulated stores of the toil of successive generations—what is it but the fruit and product of that humanizing, civilizing dependence on foreigners which is only another name for commerce? If independence of foreigners be a legitimate object of national policy; if a surly, unsocial isolation be national good and glory;—why then our commerce, our manufactures, our banks, our docks, all that vast and diversified system of life-circulation of which this metropolis is the heart and centre—the whole of it together is a mischief and a shame. Our Liverpools and Manchesters, our Sheffields and Birminghams, and the civilization of which they are the expression and result—all this wonderful creation of the genius of industry is one condensed and concentrated curse. On this independence-theory it was a great mistake building London; and now that London is built, we ought to raze it to the ground, and begin making England again on a new principle. The consequence is rather

an extreme one; yet monopoly shrinks not from it when pushed hard: monstrous, incredible, insane as the thing is, there are men with nerve enough, and logic enough, to accept the consequence in theory, and urge the realisation of it in practice.

In an article in the *Quarterly Review* for September 1840—this *Quarterly Review* being the chief literary organ of the party now in power—we have the following prescription as a panacea for all national maladies:—

“Before emigration is tried, let us endeavour to occupy our own waste lands. Millions of acres are still unreclaimed, both in Great Britain and Ireland. *Stop the gambling speculation of our manufactures*, and drain off the surplus population from our towns into the country. Let landlords plant colonies on their commons, and bogs, and mountains; plant them under their own eye, upon right principles of colonization, in organic bodies, with powers of self-government; with social privileges; with the germs of village institutions, especially with that first principle of social life and organization, an efficient ecclesiastical establishment in the centre. *Restore something of the feudal spirit into our tenure of land. Raze, if you like, to the ground, half an overgrown metropolis*, and all the idle, gossiping, gaping watering-places, where those men who ought to be each in their own parishes, ruling their estates as the representatives of the great Estate, the Monarchy of the realm, are frittering away time, and money, and dignity, and intellect, in frivolous dissipations.”

They call that *Conservatism*. “Stop the gambling speculation of our manufactures;” and “raze to the ground, if you like”—it is not absolutely necessary, but *if you like* you may as well do it while your hand is in—“raze to the ground, if you like, half an overgrown metropolis.” You may say these are the ravings of a maniac; worth no more thought than the gibberish of the strait-waistcoated inmates of St. Luke’s. Be it so: but the mania has considerable method in it: if commerce and manufactures are a nuisance, it is quite good logic to say “cut them down.” The fact is, these men hate commerce and manufactures, though it is not often they speak out so very plainly: they hate the variety, the vigour, the freedom, the power, the illimitable progressiveness of civic life, and of that commercial and manufacturing civilization on which it rests. They would “restore some-

thing of the feudal spirit"—actually, the feudal spirit; the spirit of tyranny in the few, and of serfdom in the many, the spirit of caste, the spirit of division and isolation, the spirit of war—they would restore something of this: as if England and Europe had not had somewhat too much of this already. Well! if they really would do this, it is but honest in them to say so. The feudal spirit and the industrial spirit; the spirit of division and the spirit of union; the spirit of isolation and the spirit of self-diffusion; the spirit of serfdom and the spirit of freedom—this is the alternative, and it is well done in them to put it so plainly. But do not forget, men of London! they think your metropolis *overgrown*.

Monopoly stands arrayed at every point against civilization, against humanity, against progress. It is of the party of old Chaos against Creation. All our best blessings it proclaims curses and nuisances, and does its best to make them such. To what but to monopoly do we owe the barbarous, savage outcry against *redundant population*? "*Redundant population*;" too many men; too much of the stuff that makes nations; too much of the life-blood of humanity. We must be let blood, I suppose. Send the surplus men out of the country, perhaps, by emigration. But, perhaps, they won't go. Perhaps they would like to stay rather, and eat up landlords and all in poor-rates. Emigration! Why, we may emigrate, a thousand of us a-day, for ten years together, and there will be redundant population still. Redundant population! There is no redundancy, but what their own famine-law makes:

" There's bread enough for Britain,
Had Britain leave to barter."

They throw 3,000 quarters of corn into the Thames, and then turn round and say, 'We can't feed you; there are too many of you; you may go plough in Van Diemen's Land.' Emigration, indeed! What a remedy for national exhaustion and debility! Export industry; export energy; export intellect; export working power; export all that makes a nation

of us : tax the capital of the country an extra ten per cent. to make a fund for banishing all that makes capital productive. "O you miserable financiers!"

To what but monopoly do we owe the outcry against *over-production*? "Over-production;" too much industry; too much ingenuity; too much enterprise; too much creation. How can there be over-production, so long as humanity remains unserved, and human wants wait unsatisfied? How can there be over-production while millions of acres are unploughed, and millions of human creatures unshirted, uncoated and unshod? There is no over-production; there can be no over-production, till every acre of land on the earth is cultivated, and every man, woman and child on the earth well clad and well housed. It is man's barbarian legislation that makes the over-production. Over-production! with Manchester factories full of cotton goods, and Liverpool warehouses full of corn in bond—the one waiting to be exchanged against the other, and nothing hindering but monopoly that pushes itself in between, and says, the exchange shall not be. Over-production! What would they have? Shall we leave off producing? Shall we burn up our over-produce, and then go on again? Shall working-men leave off working? What will you do with them? Starve them? Pension them? Put them on parish pay? But how long will the parish have funds to pay, after production is given over?—There is no over-production, but what comes of laws that interdict exchange of products. There is just as much over-production of cotton and hardware goods in Manchester and Sheffield, as there was over-production of beef and pork in Louisiana, when it rotted in the streets and bred yellow fever.

To what but monopoly, again, do we owe the stupid Vandal cry against *machinery*? How, in the name of common-sense, can machinery ever be a cause of national impoverishment and distress? It is quite conceivable how the sudden introduction of labour-saving mechanical invention should occasion partial and passing inconvenience in particular branches of industry, by creating a temporary displacement of manual

toil. The spade-interest was probably somewhat shaken when ploughs came in; Dædalus, we may easily imagine, was waited on by importunate deputations from the distressed and injured rowing interest; and Faust, Schæffer, and Guttemburg were, no doubt, considerably unpopular with the great copying interest. But this species of distress is very partial and very brief. The merest tyro in the history and science of manufacturing economics knows that the ultimate—and not the remotely ultimate, but the very rapid effect of mechanical improvement is, by diminishing cost, to increase consumption;—so to increase it as to multiply immensely the demand for producing labour, the demand for labour in that very department to which the machinery is applied. And the broad fact remains, that never have the working classes in this country been more prosperous—prosperous at a more rapid rate of progression—than under the stimulus of mechanical invention applied to manufacturing production.—And yet machinery is to be cried out against as a cause of national distress. The present Premier himself, who owes all he has and all he is to machinery, has—not joined in the outcry exactly (as far as I remember,) he is too wary for that, but—tolerated it, countenanced it, shown a sort of sneaking kindness for it, made use of it to serve a turn. Machinery, which is as the multiplication of human intelligence and human force; which, in all its successive stages, from the spade to the spinning-jenny, and from the canoe to the steam-ship, measures by its progress the advance of society and civilization; which cheapens, diffuses, universalises all that contributes to the sustenance, the enjoyment, the adornment of human existence; machinery, which has put this small British island at the top of the world; machinery, the sceptre by which man rules this planet—machinery makes the distress of England! They charge the national misery on Watt and Arkwright: they pick a national quarrel with the loom and the railway: they sow sedition against the steam-engine: they enunciate doctrines which, if pursued to their legitimate extent, would leave us no working tools but our teeth and nails: they throw about incendiary sur-

mises and suggestions which, if acted on, would have ended long before this, in that most hideous of national calamities—a universal machine-breaking insurrection. Thank God! these madmen's firebrands fail of their effect for lack of fuel. The heart of our manufacturing population is sound and true still. *They* know better than these lordly and ministerial incendiaries would teach them. There was a time, no later back than last August, when, for nearly a fortnight together, millions-worth of machine property lay at the mercy of wronged and starving multitudes, and not the whole army of England could have saved it—and there the machinery is still, safe and sound; in the very depth of their distress, they spared unharmed that which fools and madmen would have taught them was their worst enemy. In the midst of that perilous struggle to get a "fair day's wages for a fair day's work," Lancashire operatives knew well that the only chance they had of ever again getting work or wages either, lay in saving harmless and intact that machinery which their conservative superiors had denounced as an oppression and a mischief. It is the bread-monopoly, and the bread-monopoly alone, that could ever make it seem to be this: monopoly, which refuses an outlet to the produce of all this wonderful mechanical and manual power, circumscribes and destroys its markets, forbids its exportation by forbidding the importation of the means of payment—it is monopoly makes the distress. Not machinery, but monopoly, which dooms machinery to inaction and rust—monopoly is answerable for the distress, the wasting of heart and flesh, the paralysis of industrial energy, the destruction of national wealth, the starvation, the murder.

And now does any man believe that this monopoly-law will last:—a law against food; a law against work; a law against trade; a law which chains industry, interdicts commerce, cramps national growth, taxes toil, and starves hunger; a law made for the selfish, dirty interests of the law-makers; a law enacted under cover of fixed bayonets, and maintained by dint of bribery and lies; a law, one half feudal insolence, and the other half huckstering meanness? No! it will not

last. There is no lasting force in it. The power is not on earth that can make it last. Such things as parliamentary majorities, or parliamentary unanimities even, are not to be named or thought of in the matter; they are not elements of the question at all. All the great enduring forces that rule the world are against it, and it signifies not, who or what may be for it. Social science is against it; with its again and again repeated demonstrations of the suicidal absurdity and folly of amending the legislation of God. Social wants and woes are against it; crying aloud, with million-voiced indignation and entreaty, to have the great wrong righted. Nature is against it; with her simple, eternal laws—laws which execute themselves, which no fraud or trick of man can elude, and against which all the force of man idly and impotently breaks itself. Religion and humanity are against it; denouncing, with inextinguishable protest, the impiety of intercepting the flow of heaven's gifts, and the cruelty of withholding the supply of man's needs. It will not last; for the simplest and surest of all possible reasons—that it is a just God who made this world, and not Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Buckingham.

LECTURE III.

MONDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 1843.

THE ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL MISCHIEFS OF THE CORN-LAW MONOPOLY.

SINCE we last met in this place, two events have occurred of some very considerable significance, as regards the issue of this conflict between the landlord-monopoly and commercial and industrial freedom ; events, neither of them unexpected by those who have watched the signs of the times—events seemingly of antagonistic bearings, but in reality both working in one direction, and converging towards one result. The first of these is, that the National Anti-Corn-Law League have succeeded—as every one who knows the men, and knows the stuff that the British heart is made of, knew that they would succeed—they have succeeded in their appeal to the British people for ways and means to carry on the war against monopoly. They have raised—raised, we may almost say, without difficulty—raised without half putting out their strength, about nine-tenths of that fund of Fifty Thousand Pounds, which is destined to bring home the right and the wrong of this question to every man's door, to place in every man's hands the means of judging for himself, to inundate the land with a flood of Useful Knowledge before which monopoly must fall. We remember, I dare say, how monopolists laughed to scorn, some few weeks back, this appeal of the Lancashire men for public aid to put down a public wrong and nuisance : but monopolists laughed too soon ; monopolists have been out in their calculations this

time, as they have been sometimes before, and probably will be again. There the agitation fund is—in hands that well know how to use it: there it is, contributed with a zeal, a readiness, a heartiness, that say, more intelligibly than any words can say, *More if wanted*. It seems a good deal, fifty thousand pounds: but, after all, what is it? Somewhere about the shilling a-piece that we pay once a-year for our registration as electors: very nearly half-a-crown on every hundred pounds that monopoly (as we shall presently see) annually robs us of; exactly one four-hundredth part of what we gave, a few years ago, to set free some millions of black slaves in the West Indies that none of us ever saw. This is to set *ourselves* free; to untie our own right hands; to get a great Emancipation Act for twenty-seven millions of British-born slaves. Really, there is nothing at all wonderful about this League fund, unless it be that we here in London have been looking on, admiring those Lancashire men, when we ought to have been imitating them and helping them. However, we may take our turn presently: there will be time enough for every man to do something, before the work is quite done.

For the past week has produced another fact in the history of this question, equally well suited to rouse our zeal and call forth our strength:—and that is (not but what we all knew it before last week) that the monopolist Minister stands on his monopolist majority. *No more free trade for the present*, says Sir Robert Peel. Free-trade principles are true principles in the abstract, says Sir Robert Peel, but we will not apply them in the concrete. It is good to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, says Sir Robert Peel, *in theory*; but our practice, for the present, shall be to go on buying in the dearest, and selling in the cheapest:—no more free trade this year: let us give the sliding scale a fair trial. In that heartless, mindless, cold-blooded Queen's Speech (which the Queen, God bless her! did not speak, perhaps would not speak), a prevalent, long-continued, "depression of the manufacturing industry of the country" is acknowledged, is "deeply lamented"—and no remedy proposed.

None. Not a suggestion: not a hint; not an insinuated possibility. Industry must help itself, or it may go starve and die. I am glad of it; for industry can and will help itself. It is better they should do nothing; for nothing good just now would be done. I am glad there is to be no more small talk about fixed duty and improved sliding scales, no more nibbling at the averages, no attempt at diversion of our forces by half-quarter measures, no tub thrown to the whale—not that our whale is in much danger just now of being taken in by tubs: it is best as it is. The whole question is simplified and abridged. There is no mistake, and there can be no mistake. We have now got a great work to do, and we have got great means to do it with; we have an immense obstructive mass stopping our way, and we have got the lever-power to move it. The Premier says to the country, *More agitation is wanted to move me*; and the country says back again to the Premier, *More agitation is ready*, and we WILL move you: draw on us to any amount, and we will honour your bills at sight.—Of the effect of this agitation, carried on as it has been, as it is, and as it will be, what man can doubt that is capable of looking on an inch before him? They themselves know how it will end, as well as we do; only they would stave it off a little longer, and a little longer, if they can:—a little more bankruptcy, a little more pauperism, a little more starvation, a little more financial deficit, a little more sliding scale, a little more national decay—that the insolvents and paupers of the monopolist aristocracy may remain a little longer tenants in possession of their mortgaged estates. Only try the sliding scale another year or two, good, patient, placid British people! We will not try it. We will not have your “little more.” We are neither patient nor placid. You make it a question of time: we cannot afford to make it a question of time. Every hour that monopoly lasts, the curse that is in it works. We cannot wait. While we wait, toil waits unrewarded, hunger waits unfed, industry waits without a market, capital waits without a profit, ships wait rotting in our ports, with the auctioneer’s broom at the mast-head and nobody to bid; trade stagnates,

revenue falls away, national resource and strength waste in atrophy. Every hour that monopoly lasts, the mischiefs that come of it go on widening and deepening.

These mischiefs I have undertaken to examine with you this evening. The "Mischiefs of the Corn-Law Monopoly." I confess I approach the subject with repugnance and nausea. Bewildering it is, from its complexity and extent; from the enormity and multiplicity of the evils, economical and moral, directly or indirectly produced by it, and which work into one another with a complication which it might task any man's powers of analysis to disentangle. Tedious the thing is, from its familiarity and utter staleness, and the all-but impossibility of finding anything to say about it that has not been said ten thousand times before. Wearisome and disheartening it is, from the almost hopelessness of convincing people who at this time of day need to be convinced: for where have that man's eyes and ears been, where has his heart been, all these five years past, who has yet to learn that this food-monopoly is a blight and a curse upon us every one? Altogether, it is a repulsive subject. Still, the mischiefs of monopoly can never be a worn-out subject till monopoly itself is worn out. It is not impossible that even here and now there may be some open to conviction, who are yet unconvinced: it is probable there may be some half-convinced, with minds almost made up, but not quite: it is certain that a large amount of clear, fully-formed conviction exists on the matter, which is yet waiting to ripen into will and deed, into organized utterance and action. On the whole, I believe it will not by any means be lost time if we go into this question once more, and endeavour to find out, in some detail and particularity, how our national and social interests are acted on by monopoly—after what rate precisely it is that we are impoverished and plundered by this base, bad law.

The simplest operation of the Corn-Law Monopoly—by no means its most mischievous operation, but that which is most obvious and intelligible—is as a *tax*. The Corn-Law is a tax;

a tax on bread ; as truly a tax on bread as though a landlords' exciseman were stationed at every baker's shop counter, and after we had settled with the baker, and paid our 6*d.* or 8*d.*, that functionary were to request a 2*d.* or 3*d.* more, in order to enable his masters to maintain their station in society and pay the interest on their mortgages. I only wish they would levy it so ; for then every body would understand it, and we should be saved all this agitation. Still it is the same thing precisely as if they did levy it so. The tax is paid : paid by every man, woman and child—from the very richest to the very poorest—who eats bread ; paid by the very beggar that sweeps a crossing for the contingency of 2*d.* a-day ; paid, not to the State for public uses, of which the payer has the benefit, but paid to the landlords for private uses, of which the payer has no benefit. The tax is paid ; the enhanced price of the loaf, the difference between what the loaf costs with monopoly, and what it might, could, should and would cost without monopoly—this is as truly a tax on our bread as the three per cent. we are now paying on our incomes (in order, by the way, to keep up the bread-tax) is a tax on our earnings. What precisely the amount of this bread-tax is, it is somewhat difficult to say ; though it is not difficult to see, from a rude proximate calculation, that its amount is enormous. The population of the United Kingdom, at the census of 1841, was, in round numbers, 26 millions. Now it is allowed on all hands that the average annual consumption of every person, taking men, women and children together, is about one quarter of wheat ; consequently, if you take the average enhancement of price produced by the monopoly at 10*s.*, 15*s.* or 20*s.* a quarter (it is certainly considerably more than the first of these sums, and probably not much less than the last), you have a tax of 13 millions, 19½ millions, or 26 millions, annually extorted from the pockets of the people. And when to this bread-tax you add the monopoly tax on other agricultural produce—meat, milk, butter, cheese and beer (which is probably about as much more,) it will swell up the landlords' tax on food to a sum which cannot be much less than the whole public revenue of the country.

Perhaps you would like to have some exacter estimate of this matter, and one possessing rather more authority than this rude, conjectural sort of calculation which is all I can pretend to give you. Perhaps you would like the estimate of a practical man, an official man, a government man, a man conversant with facts and figures, and financial statistics. Well! we have this: we have the estimate of a practical, official, government man; a man who lived among facts and figures all his life, and was, of all others, competent to speak with authority on such a point. I allude to the late Mr. James Deacon Hume, Secretary to the Board of Trade; who, in that department and in the Customs, spent forty-nine years in the public service, and obtained a most extensive and accurate insight into the workings of the whole and every part of what is called the protective system. This Mr. James Deacon Hume, whom Sir Robert Peel spoke of, just twelve months ago, in his smooth way, as "a gentleman whose loss he was sure we must all sincerely deplore"—this Mr. Hume, on giving his evidence before the Committee on the Import Duties, three years ago, was asked the following question:—

"Have you ever made a calculation as to the amount of taxation which the community pay in consequence of the increased price of wheat and butcher's meat, which is occasioned by the monopoly now held by land?"

To which Mr. Hume replied—

"I think that a tolerable calculation may be made of that increased charge. It is generally calculated that each person, upon the average, consumes a quarter of wheat a-year. Assuming, then, the amount of duty that this wheat paid, or the price enhanced by protection, whatever that is, as far as bread goes, to be 10s., it would be that amount upon the whole population. Then you could hardly say less than perhaps double that for butcher's meat and other matters; so that if we were to say that the corn is enhanced by 10s. a-quarter, there would be that 10s., and 20s. more, as the increase of the price of meat and other agricultural productions, including hay and oats for horses, barley for beer, as well as butter and cheese. That would be £36,000,000 a-year, and the public are, in fact, paying that as effectually out of their pockets as if it did go to the revenue in the form of direct taxes."

This calculation, you will observe, is made on the census of

1831, when the population of the empire was twenty-four millions. It is now nearly twenty-seven millions. Consequently, on Mr. Hume's *data*, for thirty-six millions food-tax, we must now read *forty millions*. Here, then, you have the testimony of a man of experience, knowledge, talent, integrity and official responsibility—a practical man—a man speaking with the authority of half a century of useful and honourable public service,—you have the testimony of such a man, that this country is plundered of forty millions of pounds sterling annually (taking one year with another,) in the shape of an artificially enhanced price of the first necessities of life. Forty millions annually, withdrawn from the productive capital of the country; withdrawn from commerce; withdrawn from the people's taxable resources and tax-paying power. Forty millions annually, taken from those who produce, to be handed over to those who do not produce. A landlords' tax of forty millions annually! A tax of the most abominably oppressive and unequal sort that ever was; for it is a capitation-tax, a poll-tax; a tax which the day-labourer and the duke pay just alike—for the day-labourer eats, or ought to eat, as much bread as the duke. A poll-tax it is: 30s. a-head: that is, it is an income-tax of about six per cent. on the yearly income of every man who earns 10s. a-week (supposing him, by the way, to be childless and unmarried,) and an income-tax of a fraction of a penny per cent. on the nobleman who inherits an estate of £100,000 a-year. A tax it is, too, of the most mischievously fluctuating amount; for the estimate is only an average one, you will recollect. It is a fluctuating tax: sometimes high, sometimes low, sliding up and down, as Sir Robert Peel's scale slides. Sometimes the 30s. a-year drops to 10s.; sometimes it is up at 50s.; sometimes this day-labourer's income-tax is two per cent., and at other times it is ten per cent., just as food rises or falls, and as he has to spend a larger or a smaller proportion of his little income in buying food. This is the bread-tax, simply as a tax. A tax it is of enormous amount in the gross, and levied in the most horribly unjust and mischievous way in the detail—a tax of forty millions a-year, on the average of

years—one year half that, another year double that: a poll-tax of 30s. a-head on the average of years—one year half that, another year double that: a poor man's income-tax of six per cent. on the average of years—one year half that, another year double that: a tax not paid to the State, for public purposes, of which every man has the benefit, but a tax paid to land-owning individuals for private purposes, of which only themselves and their mortgagees have the benefit. All this, on the showing, you will please to recollect, not of any itinerant Anti-Corn-Law lecturer, any hired demagogue agitator of the League, but of a man grown gray in confidential government service—a gentleman whose loss the Prime Minister himself "sincerely deplores."

This is the simple, elementary mischief of the food-tax. It is a tax: enormous in amount, infamously unequal in its pressure, and uncompensated by any equivalent, or pretence of an equivalent, in the shape of public service. It is a tax on food. It makes the first necessities of life artificially scarce, dear, and hard to come by: the industry, the working power of the country must work the more and enjoy the less because of it. It makes our bread, meat, milk, butter, cheese and beer cost us forty millions annually more than they need cost us. We must all work the harder, and live the harder, to make up this forty millions. We must toil like slaves to earn it, or we must live like slaves to save it. We must take it out of our rest and recreation, or we must take it out of our comforts and luxuries. We must make it up somehow, before ever we can so much as live. The baker sells no bread to the customer that offers him only the price of the bread and forgets the landlords' tax-money; he must have the tax too, to pay the miller, to pay the farmer, to pay the landlord. Forty millions a-year taken out of our wages, out of our profits, out of our daily comforts, out of our blood and sinews—forty millions a-year picked out of our pockets by the men that make our laws.

But I am saying too much about this forty millions. It is a small matter, after all. This poll-tax of 30s. a-head—this

poor man's income-tax of six per cent.—is really the least part of the mischief. It is precisely that part of the mischief which, though grievous, is not quite unendurable. It is not the tax that signifies so much, enormous as the tax is, and iniquitous as is the selfish and sordid legislation that lays it on. It is not, chiefly and mainly, because monopoly taxes us that monopoly is a mischief and a curse—but because, while it taxes us, it ties our hands from working and earning; while it burdens us, it weakens us; while it tasks our strength, it destroys our strength by cutting off the resources from which our strength is fed. It is not as a tax that monopoly most hurts us, but as an *obstruction to commerce*, a barrier to exchange, a limitation of our industrial and producing power. We could pay the tax, if the tax were all: but our hands are tied; we are not allowed to work; we have no breathing room; our working power is restricted and curtailed; our growing power is cramped. **THIS** is the mischief: all the rest, compared with this, is light as the dust of the balance.

The natural, necessary operation of this Corn-Law (incomparably its most mischievous operation) is to limit and cramp that industrial energy of which foreign commerce is the outlet. I do not know that it is necessary to argue this: the thing argues itself, to any man who can put two ideas together. To refuse to import the corn of America, is to refuse to export to America the cotton and hardware goods that would go out in exchange for that corn. Therefore it is to refuse manufacturing the cotton and hardware goods that would be so exported. Therefore it is to refuse employment to the capital and labour that would be expended on such manufacture. Therefore it is to doom that capital and labour to waste in unproductiveness; the one evaporates in bankruptcy, and the other goes on the parish-rates, and eats up national capital instead of creating national capital. There is no getting out of this circle of cause and effect. A law prohibiting or restricting importation of food into a densely-peopled commercial and manufacturing country, might as well be entitled, “A law to increase the number of

bankrupts and paupers:" it is that. They may call it what they will—that is what it is. "Protection!" It is protection from bread and meat; protection from work and wages; protection from trade and commerce; protection from revenue; protection from industry; it is protection from national growth and greatness.

There is no breaking this chain of cause and effect. The wages and food of our manufacturing population are conditional on the power of manufacturing capital to give profitable employment: the power of manufacturing capital to give profitable employment is conditional on the export demand: exportation is conditional on the power of importing the means of payment; and the means of payment from the countries that most want our manufactures, are mainly that which we most want—food. Refuse to take that food, forbid its ingress by prohibition, restrict its ingress by the juggle of the sliding scale; make the trade in food a dangerous, difficult, gambling trade—restrict the importation of food, and to that extent you restrict exportation of manufactures, to that extent you restrict manufacturing production, to that extent you make manufacturing capital and labour useless and unproductive; you send the unproductive labourer on the parish, to eat up the produce of other people's labour in the shape of parochial taxation. The process is perfectly suicidal. Directly you begin it, you turn the *plus* quantity into a *minus* quantity; you leave off adding, and begin subtracting; you leave off creating, and begin destroying; you turn the producer of wealth into a consumer of wealth; where you might have another million to the excise and customs, you have, instead, another million to the poor-rates; you paralyze the right arm of industry, you waste, sink, burn and destroy national wealth, resource, revenue and power; you pay the landlords forty millions a-year to do that which you paid hundreds of millions to prevent Napoleon from doing. The Corn-Law does what Milan and Berlin decrees could not do. This is the natural, necessary tendency of such a law as our Corn-Law. It needs no official returns, no nice statistical calculations to make it out: it is as certain as that two and

two are four; as certain as that fire is hot, and water wet; it is rooted in the nature of things, in the natural laws of trade. The tendency may be kept in abeyance awhile by extraneous circumstances. We of Great Britain have gone on till within these last few years—though not without sore alternations and vicissitudes, still we have gone on—partly from having had the start of other nations in mechanical invention, partly from our superior natural advantages and industrial habits; but now it has come upon us. Our stupid and insane policy is finding us out. The signs of stoppage and exhaustion are unmistakeable. We cannot go on any further—we cannot even stop where we are—without a thorough change of system. European markets are gradually closing against us, by one retaliatory tariff after another, leaving us only those of America for our future dependence: we have got to the end of our line, and that line must be snapped, or we stop.

This is where we are now under landlord legislation. Our commercial and manufacturing energy, skill, resource and power stand still before this dead-wall obstruction of the food monopoly. There are the markets ready waiting for us beyond the Atlantic, and here are the factories and warehouses to supply them; the hands waiting to be employed, and the mouths waiting to be fed. There are the fields and the labourers ready waiting—that would grow the corn, that would pay the merchants, that would give the export orders, that would set every loom and spindle of Lancashire in movement, and provide a fair day's wages for a fair day's work: but Monopoly stops the way. Monopoly says, No! it shall not be: the corn shall not be grown, the merchants shall not be paid, the manufacturers shall not get the orders, the spinners and weavers shall not have the wages, work and food, they shall go on the parish first. And so we have manufacturing distress, commercial stagnation, financial deficit, swollen poor-rates, and attenuated customs and excise. Manufacturing distress! Time was when it was doubted whether any such thing existed. They did not believe it. They would not believe it. When it was talked of in the House of Commons, they said, Oh, oh! No, no! It was partial; it was temporary; it

was exaggerated; it would die away; things would come round. But manufacturing distress has gone on and on, for the cause of it has gone on and on; and at last it has got into the revenue, it has got into the royal speech—a great glaring fact, seen and known of all men. Manufacturing distress! for five long years it has gone on with swift, unrelenting progress—not in one district only, but in all districts where manufactures are carried on;—in the North of England, and in the West of England, in Lancashire and in Renfrewshire, in cottons, woollens and hardware, in mines and collieries, in manufactures with machinery-improvements, and in manufactures without machinery-improvements—all the same; the symptoms everywhere identical in kind, though varied in degree—all of them having essentially one and the same cause, and exhibiting essentially one and the same set of effects—the wasting away of capital into bankruptcy, and of producing labour into consuming, devouring pauperism.

It can hardly be necessary now to offer you any detailed statistical illustrations of the extent, the depth, the intensity of that manufacturing distress which is the result of the exhaustive process to which the food-monopoly, together with deficient harvests, has subjected our industrial resources during the last five years. If we must have official facts and figures to verify and measure that manufacturing distress, that industrial exhaustion and debility which has now found its way into royal speeches,—take the facts and figures of the last Quarterly Revenue Return: look at that, and see where monopoly is sending us. A falling off in the Customs, of £580,000 on one quarter: a falling off in the Excise, of £717,000 for the same quarter: altogether, about £1,300,000. There are the statistics of the distress. The consuming power, the tax-paying power of the millions of the working classes by whom our excise and customs revenue is mainly created and sustained, has fallen off at this enormous rate, between January last year and January this year: *thirteen hundred thousand pounds in one quarter*; which is after the rate of *five millions and more in one year*. There are figures for those who like them. And now think of the facts that are behind and

underneath those figures—the pauperism, the insolvency, the declining wages, the annihilated capital, the privations, the life-weariness, the desolation, the agony of hundreds and hundreds of thousands of brave, true English hearts; and then think of the cause that is behind and underneath all this—the obstruction of industrial production and exchange, and you will pretty well see where the country is driving to under this devouring, consuming curse of the landlord monopoly. People cannot pay the excise and customs, because they have not wages to buy excisable and customable things with; and they have not wages, because they have not work; and they have not work, because capital cannot profitably employ them; and capital cannot profitably employ them, because the produce of capital and labour cannot find a market; and produce cannot find a market, not because there is no market (for there the markets are within twelve days' sail of us,) but because monopoly blockades the market. Monopoly forbids exchange; therefore, it forbids production; therefore, it forbids wages; therefore, it forbids consumption of comforts and luxuries purchasable with wages; therefore, it forbids revenue.

And while we are on this subject of revenue, let me ask what, think you, is to be done with this deficit in the Customs and Excise? Of course it must be made up somehow; but *how, in particular*, is it to be made up? The obvious and natural way is by liberating industry and commerce; by freely allowing the exchange, that stimulates the production, that pays the wages, that consume the commodities, that yield revenue. But this obvious and natural way will not be taken: we must think of something else. Now remember that thirteen hundred thousand pounds deficit on the quarter is five millions deficit on the year. Suppose we should have five millions deficit on the year—what then? Sir Robert Peel, indeed, hopes better things: Sir Robert Peel “feels confident that the future produce of the revenue will be sufficient to meet every exigency of the public service.” Well, but suppose it should not be sufficient. Sir Robert Peel gives no particular reason for his hope; and it has so happened, more than once in the course of his life, that Sir Robert Peel has hoped

and felt confident about things that never came to pass. Sir Robert Peel hoped and felt confident once that he could maintain Orange ascendancy in Ireland. Sir Robert Peel hoped and felt confident once that he could save Gatton and Old Sarum from Schedule A. Sir Robert Peel hoped once that this manufacturing distress would turn out to be exaggerated, and that things would come round. Sir Robert Peel felt confident once that no minister of the Crown would ever dare to propose an income-tax in time of peace. Sir Robert Peel "feels confident;" but then who feels confident about Sir Robert Peel? He "feels confident that the future produce of the revenue will be sufficient to meet every exigency of the public service." But suppose it should *not* be sufficient. He does not a thing to make it sufficient. He leaves the cause in unrestrained action that makes it insufficient. A man might as well "feel confident" that a stone let fall from the hand will stop before it gets to the ground. It is feeling confident that causes will not produce their effects; that the same cause will produce contradictory effects; that effects will come of themselves without causes. Suppose that the same causes should go on producing the same effects; suppose continued obstruction of commerce to produce continued waste of capital, continued diminution of wages, continued insolvency and pauperism—will the future produce of the revenue be sufficient then? And, if insufficient, what will be done to make it sufficient? Why, we shall pay *ten per cent. more on the income-tax*: we may "feel confident" of that.

And what shall we do with our stagnant and declining manufactures? and with the population which those manufactures have hitherto employed? and with the population which they would employ, in future, if monopoly would let them alone? that is a question to be thought of. Rather, it is *the* question. WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE PEOPLE if manufactures go on dwindling and decaying? How shall the people be employed and fed? How shall law and order be maintained? How shall England be kept together? that is the question. We may rail, if we please, at the factory system, and the factory

towns; we may say Manchester is very dirty, and Paisley very noisy, and Bolton far from picturesque; we may dislike tall chimnies, and execrate black smoke, and loathe the selfishness and turbulence of the millocrat agitators that will not lie down quietly while the landlords pick their pockets: but look at the thing practically; there are the manufactures; there is the population which manufactures have hitherto employed and fed—a million and a half of them employed and fed by the cotton manufacture alone, besides the other millions employed and fed by woollens, silks and hardware. Now what is to become of all these millions of human creatures congregated in the great hives of our manufacturing industry, and what is to become of *us*, if the present revulsion is to be permanent and progressive; if we are to keep on going down and down, capital wasting, and labour withering, under the curse of the food-monopoly? On the profits of manufacturing capital those millions have lived as yet: on the profits of that capital have lived all the shoals and swarms of emigrants from the agricultural districts, that have been drawn to the centres of manufacturing industry by the offer of more work and better wages than they could get in their rural parishes: but what if manufacturing capital should come to yield no profit—what are they to do then?

The population of Great Britain grows at the rate of 230,000 annually: every year brings with it 230,000 new mouths to be fed, and pairs of hands to be employed. Now who is to employ and feed them? Can agriculture do it? Will Buckinghamshire and Essex take them? Does the soil grow as the people grow? Do we get a new county every year to put our new people in? If these 230,000 new human creatures that we have every year are not to go on the parish and eat us all up together, they must produce, they must earn, they must work. But work *at what*? Hardly at the plough. The plough has not work for them. For these forty years past and more the plough has been unable to employ the new people. The population returns show that, while the proportion of births to deaths is much greater in the agricultural than in the manufacturing counties—greater

in Hereford, Cumberland, Norfolk, Suffolk, Oxford and Buckingham, than it is in Lancashire, Durham, Warwick, Stafford, Cheshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire—yet it is in these (not in the former) that the population increases the fastest. The agricultural counties disgorge their redundant population on the manufacturing counties, because manufactures can, and agriculture cannot, find them in work and food. There is a large, regular and growing migration of hands and mouths, from the agriculture which cannot keep them, to the manufactures which can and do keep them. Hitherto, our surplus tens and hundreds of thousands have swarmed over to Manchester and Sheffield, to Stockport and Paisley, and have lived, without troubling us, on their share of the profits of manufacturing capital. But what if manufacturing capital should cease to yield a profit? what if Manchester and Sheffield, Stockport and Paisley should say, ‘We can’t feed your spare population any more; you must keep them at home, in the parishes where they were born; and you must take back, at the same time, all those you have sent us already; all the multitudes that were born in your agricultural parishes, that belong to those parishes—back they must go every one, to the place whence they came’—suppose Manchester and Sheffield, Stockport and Paisley are driven to this, what shall we be driven to? What shall we do with all this teeming population, when manufacturing profits finally run dry? The people must live, and will live, as long as there is anything in the country for them to live upon. But how will they live? Shall we have a public subscription, a Queen’s begging letter, once a month? Queen’s letters and public subscriptions will not go far. Let me give you a little illustration of what this sort of charity will do, towards supplying the place of wages of labour: I read from Dr. W. Cooke Taylor’s “Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire:”—

“I have obtained some of the statistics of distress in Bolton, through which I passed this morning. The diminution of wages in the town is calculated at £200,000 annually; but I am persuaded that the amount is much greater. On the other hand, the increased price of food requires an

increase of expenditure of £118,000 annually. The injury done to the working population by diminishing the amount of employment and increasing the price of food—both of which evils are obvious results from the same cause—must be estimated at £320,000 annually, or about £1,000 for every working-day. In plain terms, our system of protection takes £1,000 away from the wages of the operatives of Bolton every day of their lives. No wonder that under such circumstances they should have sunk into destitution, and that their misery should go on increasing with accelerated velocity. Let us just for a moment cast a glance at the amount of relief sent under such circumstances. A Government Commissioner has been sent down to superintend the distribution of £500 among the suffering people; so that the splendid boon of permanent relief to the operatives is just one-half of the sum fiscally subtracted from their wages every working-day in the year."

It is clear we must try something better than Queen's letters and public subscriptions, to feed people that get no wages. Shall we try emigration? ship them off to Australia and Canada? Not unless we would like more income-tax. Emigration costs money. We may emigrate, 230,000 of us a year for ten years together, and we shall be at the end of the ten years precisely where we were at the beginning. Shall we put them on the poor-rates? Yes, that will be it. They will go on the poor-rates, and they will stay on the poor-rates, as long as any body is left to pay poor-rates. But how long will poor-rates last—how long will anything in England last—with all this mass of producing, tax-paying industry, converted into non-producing, tax-eating pauperism? We shall by-and-by want more standing army, more rural and town police, to keep down the paupers; and more tax to pay the army and police; and more tax again to make up the growing deficit that will come in the train of growing pauperism.

This is the question for us all to answer: *what shall we do with the people*, when the great labour-markets of manufactures fail us? Men of acres, men of consols, men who keep shops, men who pay rates and taxes, men who have capital to invest, men who have labour to sell!—what do you think will become of your acres, your consols, your shops, your capital, your labour, in face of a growing and spreading pauperism? The manufacturers say, 'We will employ your population—employ and feed them; employ and feed them

without cost or charge to you: send them to us, and we will make them producing, tax-paying members of the community, every one: work and wages we have in plenty—we will feed them handsomely and have a profit over, if you will only stand out of our way, and let corn grow on the prairies of the western world.’ But if monopoly keeps on saying that the manufacturers shall not do this, then who shall? Why, we shall: we, the middle classes of England; we shall feed them, at our own cost and charge. We shall pay the increased and increasing rates, necessary to meet an increased and increasing pauperism: we shall pay the new taxes, necessary to support the new soldiery and police that will be necessary to keep hunger within the limits of poor-house dietary. We shall have to pay up the financial deficit consequent on the diminished tax-paying power of the millions. That growing population, which, if accompanied by growing production, would be a growing wealth and strength, will be, instead, a growing poverty and weakness: every human creature that is born, instead of being a new help and blessing, will be a new tax. It will all come on us, the middle classes. We shall have to pay the non-producing men’s taxes, and our own taxes too; and the tax of keeping them; and the tax of keeping them in order: we shall have to pay it, as merchants and shopkeepers, out of profits diminished by the impoverishment of consumers, and to pay it, as working men, out of wages diminished by increase of competition. We shall have to pay it, and we shall deserve to pay it: for though it was not we that made the food-monopoly, we maintain that monopoly by our own supineness, sleepiness, and servile stupidity.

This is the prime, central, radical mischief of the Corn-Law. It stops the way of our foreign trade; that foreign trade which uses up the manufactures, that employ and feed the people, that pay the revenue, that keeps society together. While this stoppage lasts, there is a continuous destruction going on of national capital. Every mill that stops in the manufacturing towns makes the nation poorer: it turns producers into consumers, tax-payers into tax-eaters. This is

the radical mischief of the food-monopoly. It is not so much as a burden that we feel it, but as a weakness; not that it taxes us forty millions a year, but that it cramps and chains down our industrial energies. It is not the money it filches out of our pockets that undoes us, but the trade that it blocks up, the export orders that it intercepts, the work and wages that it stops.

I dare say you remember that story which used to amuse our childish imaginations—of Sindbad the Sailor and the Old Man of the Sea. Poor Sindbad in the clutches of that monster is an apt prefiguration of this country struggling under the burden, and choking under the cramping restraints of the food-monopoly. Perhaps you will allow me to refresh your memories with this pleasant legend of our young days. It is a sort of typical foreshowing of the whole of our Anti-Corn-Law question.

Sindbad (who may represent on this occasion the British Commercial Interest) had been wrecked, I may remind you, on a desert island. What there befel him he tells thus :—

“ When I was a little advanced into the island, I saw an old man, who seemed very weak and feeble. He sat upon the banks of a stream, and at first I took him to be one who had been shipwrecked like myself. I went towards him and saluted him; but he only bowed his head a little. [*Agricultural Distress.*] I asked him what he did there; but instead of answering me, he made a sign for me to take him upon my back, and carry him over the brook, signifying that it was to gather fruit. [*Petition for Agricultural Relief.*] I believed him really to stand in need of help; so I took him on my back, and having carried him over, bid him get down; but instead of that, he who to me had appeared very decrepit, clasped his legs nimbly about my neck, sat astride me upon my shoulders, and held my throat so tight [*Bayonet Bill of 1815*] that I thought he would have strangled me, the fright of which made me faint away and fall down. [*Manufacturing Distress.*] Notwithstanding my fainting, the ill-natured old fellow kept fast about my neck, but opened his legs a little to give me some time to recover my breath. [*Improved Sliding Scale.*] When I had done so, he thrust one of his feet against my stomach, and struck me so rudely on the side with the other, that he forced me to rise up against my will. [*Income-Tax.*] He never left me all day; and when I lay down to rest me at night, he laid himself down by me, holding always fast about my neck. Every morning he pushed me to make me awake; and afterwards obliged

me to get up and walk, and pressed me with his feet. You may judge then what trouble I was in, to be charged with such a burden as I could noways rid myself from."

At last, however, poor Sindbad did find a way to rid himself of this incubus. He resorted to an ingenious mode of *Agitation*, which, after a while, effectually agitated the old wretch off his seat. "I threw him on the ground," the story concludes—

"Where he lay without motion, when I took up a great stone, with which I crushed his head to pieces; and I was extremely rejoiced to be freed thus for ever from this cursed old fellow."

We may call that *Total and Immediate Repeal*.

The one plain, broad question into which this whole Anti-Corn-Law discussion resolves itself is, Shall we henceforth be a growing nation, or a declining nation? Only by our commerce and manufactures can we grow. We have passed, for ever passed, that stage of national existence at which domestic agriculture can be our mainstay: we have outgrown our domestic agriculture. We have a population to employ and feed, which only commerce and manufactures can employ and feed; we have a revenue to make up every year, which only commerce and manufactures can make up. What is to become of us, if we let monopoly go on obstructing, cramping and crippling our commerce and manufactures? What can come of it, but a slow, wasting national decline? Think of what is implied in that:—to live in a *declining country*; a country which has done growing, and has begun to die—one limb after another of its strength and greatness mortifying; a country where production permanently falls short of consumption; where capital has ceased to find ready and profitable investment; where labour has ceased to find a fair day's wages for a fair day's work; an over-crowded country, an under-fed country, a country where pauperism eats its way on and on, up and up, from class to class, and the only question is, who shall be devoured last. A horrible picture this: yet a picture it is which has already begun to realise itself, and

which will go on and realise itself in all its hideousness, if we let monopoly have its will of us. They are strangling the country; and Sir Robert Peel looks on and mends the rope.

We have all heard of that cruel experiment of a poor mouse put under the receiver of an air-pump, and subjected to the exhaustive action of that machine. At first the little creature knows nothing of what is the matter; only it feels a strange, novel sensation of general uncomfortableness. Then, as the pumping goes on, it gets distressed, gasps for air, draws longer and deeper breaths, and strains its little lungs to the uttermost to get what air there is, till, at last, after writhing in the agony of suffocation, and trying, with desperate debility, to burst its prison-walls, it gives over, and dies. Now, only fancy a company of doctors watching the little thing, and leisurely discussing its case: one mildly hoping that by-and-by it will come round; another blandly suggesting that perhaps the symptoms of distress are exaggerated; and a third plausibly insinuating that it makes the distress for itself by breathing so very hard. Why, it is OXYGEN it wants all the while; fresh air; breathing room; *stop the pump*: give it oxygen, and send the quacks about their business.

At one point our parallel fails. It is not a mouse they have got under their receiver, and are pumping the breath out of, but a Lion, that will by-and-by knock over receiver, pump, quack doctors and all, but he WILL HAVE THE OXYGEN.

LECTURE IV.

MONDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 1843.

THE ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL MISCHIEFS OF THE CORN-LAW MONOPOLY (CONTINUED).

IN the last Lecture we considered two great, capital mischiefs chargeable on monopoly, as it affects our economical and financial interests; viewing it first as a *tax*, taking vast sums of money annually out of our pockets to put into the pockets of the landlords; and next, as an *obstruction to trade*, limiting our commercial relations, repressing our manufacturing industry, and cutting at the root of that commercial and manufacturing prosperity on which our national growth and greatness depend. Monopoly limits employment, wastes capital, pauperises labour, makes a growing population a growing tax, adds millions to the poor-rates, and deducts millions from the exchequer; it turns producers into consumers, payers of taxes into eaters of taxes, and makes hole after hole in the revenue, which must be filled up, and which will be filled up (while it can) by tax after tax. With a growing population, which agriculture does not and cannot employ and feed, but which manufactures and commerce can and will employ and feed, if they are only let alone; with a declining revenue, which only can be safely and permanently made up out of the profits of capital and the expenditure of wages—with the country at this pass, monopoly stops the way of commerce, puts a veto on manufactures, annihilates profits and wages, turns the poor to live as paupers on those who are just a degree less poor, and sends the tax-gatherer about to

collect an income-tax that will make us all poorer still. This is the exhaustive process which monopoly is now carrying on with us ; a process exhaustive of our industry, exhaustive of our profits, exhaustive of our capital, exhaustive of our revenue and our means of paying revenue,—and I hope and trust (if my Lord Brougham will please not think the topic calculated to “excite discontent,”) exhaustive of our patience.

I proceed, this evening, to notice some other mischiefs of the landlord monopoly—mischiefs either connected with, and growing out of those already mentioned, or else resulting from its action on other classes of the community, besides those more immediately interested in trade and manufactures.

And first let us see what monopoly does for the *farmer*. The “British farmer,” that they talk so much about, at and after their agricultural dinners, and the protection of whose interests is the “action’s, passion’s, being’s use and end” of those legislators, who, under the style and title of “Farmers’ Friends,” filch money out of other people’s pockets, and stop the way of other people’s industry—the British farmer—what does he get from monopoly ? Why, he gets *an easy road to ruin ; with political serfdom by the way*. This so elaborately and extravagantly protected interest is, of all others, the suffering interest, the complaining interest. It is notorious that the farming business, taking the average of any ten years, or any seven years, is about the worst business in Great Britain ; the business in which more money is lost, and more men are ruined, than in any other. Within the last twenty-eight years, the British farmer has had four Acts of Parliament made for his protection : and within the same twenty-eight years, he has had five Parliamentary Committees to examine into his distresses. He is, at this moment, going through a sixth crisis of distress (with a “farmers’ friends” majority in Parliament, too,) out of which distress neither Act nor Committee is likely to reach him a helping hand. There he is, and there he may stay, for anything protective legislation is likely to do for him, until it shall please Sir

Robert Peel to give another downward shove to that eternal sliding scale.

The operation of Corn-Laws on the farmer is simply and briefly this; that they have invariably *tempted him first, and betrayed him afterwards*. From time to time they have promised him impossibilities in the matter of prices: on the faith of such promise he has undertaken impossibilities in the matter of rent: prices have gone down, but rents have kept up; and the British farmer's capital pays the difference. This is the *rationale* of what is called "agricultural distress." Corn-Law after Corn-Law has promised the farmer that he should have such and such prices for his wheat; on the faith of such promises he has contracted to pay rents adjusted by the standard of such prices; but in every case the promise of the law has been broken, for it was not in the nature of things that it should be kept:—the high prices have not been maintained: but the high rents have been maintained (the farmer's friends never made a law to give protection from that), and so *the farmer is sold up to balance the account*. This, in brief, is the history of the farming interest for the last twenty-eight years. In 1815, the farmer's friends promised him he should have 80s. a quarter. The farmer believed the promise, and made his bargain with his landlord accordingly: rents were fixed at the 80s. standard, cultivation was carried on at the 80s. standard. Every patch of land that would pay the expenses of tillage at the 80s. standard was brought under the plough; as it was said at the time, the land was "sown with guineas," in hope of golden harvests. What was the consequence? The harvests came; but the golden guineas did not come. Nature kept her promise, but an unnatural legislation did not and could not keep its promise. The farmer only got his 80s. *twice*. In 1822, he was getting, not 80s., but 44s. 7d.: he was paying his 80s. rents out of his 44s. receipts, and his capital went to square the account. In 1822, the farmers' friends tried again, and made a new Corn-Law. This time they promised 70s. Again the promise was believed, again rents were fixed on the faith of it. Well! what followed? Why, the farmer had to

wait *seventeen years* before he could see 70s. for his wheat : only once (in the year 1839) was the legislatorial promise fulfilled. More agricultural distress, more ruin, more extinction of British farmer's capital. With a truly marvellous patience, hoping against hope, and believing against evidence, they tried again ;—this time with the ingenious, elaborate gimcrack of the sliding scale. By the Corn-Law of 1828 the farmers' friends promised that prices should keep steady at and about 64s. ; and rents were re-adjusted accordingly on the 64s. scale. Within seven years from that, the British farmer was selling wheat at 39s. 4d. ; rents going on the while at the 64s. standard (they never made a sliding scale for that part of the business). Agricultural distress again ; farming insolvency and ruin again ; with a committee of farmers' friends to hear evidence and print blue books—and do nothing. Last year they actually tried again : Sir Robert Peel promised them 56s.. Not six months passed by, and the farmer was getting 47s. ; and all the comfort farmers' friends had to offer was *good advice*. The farmer must "throw himself on his own resources," and learn organic chemistry.

So it has gone on with the British farmer, year by year, this quarter of a century past, and so it must go on as long as he puts his trust in Corn-Laws and farmers' friends. One false promise after another, and one disappointment after another. Each new Corn-Law has turned out a new delusion and a new ruin. One batch of farmers after another has been used up, sold off and swept away, to pay, with the last shilling of their capital, rents which they had bargained to pay on a fallacious promise of prices and profits that were never realised. This is the British farmer's share of monopoly—*high fixed rents, on the basis of uncertain and fluctuating prices*. The whole of landlord legislation is, as regards the farmer, a series of broken promises. Corn-Laws tempt the farmer first, and betray him afterwards. They tempt him to do what he cannot do without ruining himself, by promising that they will do what in the nature of things cannot be done. For, as Sir Robert Peel says, "It is im-

possible to fix the price of food by any legislative enactment." *Sliding scale* they call it: felicitous nomenclature! Whatever other qualities it may have, it is certainly a scale on which the British farmer slides. Never was such a hoax in all this world, as this of the farmers and the farmers' friends. One year they make the poor creatures bawl, "Protection for ever, and no surrender" and vote in droves for them at the election:—and about the same time the next year (with wheat at 50s. and a falling market) they are edifying them at agricultural dinners with homilies on the text of farming improvement and "own resources;" the feast of reason and the flow of soul, characteristic of bucolic festivities, being further enlivened with anticipated possibilities and probabilities of the scale by-and-by sliding again, and the little protection becoming, in course of time, less still.

It will be well for the British farmer when the scale has slid away altogether. Nothing can really protect him against these destructive fluctuations in the value of his produce, these successive exposures of his capital to be swamped and sunk in the effort to fulfil impossible contracts and pay impossible rents—nothing can really protect the farmer but the total abolition of that monopoly which, by preventing a regular trade in corn, is mainly chargeable with the fluctuations, and which, by holding out a promise to him that in the nature of things cannot be realised, tempts him into the perilous contracts to pay impossible rents. As long as he keeps on looking for protection to a Corn-Law, so long will he be unprotected from the exactions of his landlord. The protection he most wants is protection from being tempted by false promises to make bad bargains. As long as a shred or scrap of an act of parliament remains, undertaking to secure him in high prices, the landlord will take care to secure himself in high rents; and when rents and prices part company, the farmer will go to the wall. As long as a particle of protection is left in the statute book, the farmer's profits, his capital, his all, will remain contingent on politics; contingent on changes of ministry, on parliamentary majorities, and on the pledges of farmers' friends.

While he trusts to protection, he is the most unprotected mortal breathing; he starts at every shadow; the Duke of Buckingham's blue ribbon gives him the cold ague, and he lives in bodily fear lest some fine day Sir Robert Peel should, after all, "apply" the free-trade velveteens "to his own use." Let there be *modification* of the Corn-Law—a new sliding scale or a fixed duty (which every one knows would by-and-by be unfixed again)—let there be modification only, and the farmer's friends will tell him, it does not signify, he is none the worse, he has got protection enough left still, he can very well go on paying the old rent, making up for the loss of the old protection by his "own resources." Only by a total, immediate and final repeal, once for all, can the farmer get that which, once for all, he wants—a fair and honest re-adjustment of his rents. I am glad to see that the Anti-Corn-Law League are devoting so much of their attention to the business of convincing and converting the farmer. It is a farmers' question as much as it is a manufacturers' question. The farmer has no interest whatever—no real, permanent interest—in high prices, any more than the shoemaker has an interest in dear leather, or the carpenter in dear wood. His interest is in prices as little fluctuating as may be—the lower the better—with rents adjusted accordingly. His interest is in the cheapness of land and seed-corn, the raw material of his agricultural manufacture; in the number and wealth of his customers; in thriving trade and commerce, to keep his market brisk and furnish openings in life for his sons and daughters; and, above all and with it all, in the protection this would give him from the exorbitancies and exactions of the farmers' friends.

And the *agricultural labourer*—what does monopoly for him? Monopolists profess abundance of regard for the agricultural labourer. To hear them talk, they are not only farmers' friends, but they are labourers' friends; nay, they are chiefly that: they keep the farmer in the servitude and thralldom of the tenancy-at-will, for no other earthly reason than that they may exercise a sort of patriarchal supervision and control over the farmer's treatment of his labourers in

the matter of food and wages. Well, then! and how fares it with the labourer? What is his share in monopoly? Why, *seven shillings a-week and potatoes*; with the union workhouse in the background. He "rejoices in potatoes," as it was heartlessly phrased the other day, at a dinner of the farmers' and labourers' friends, with their own Duke of Buckingham in the chair. They talk much—these labourers' friends—of "rural felicity;" they lisp smooth things of cottages and honeysuckles; they can be sternly eloquent about the smoke and dirt of factory-towns, and the miseries of factory-slaves, and the cruelty of allowing a further extension of the factory system to absorb labour from peaceful agricultural hamlets into noisy and crowded manufacturing towns. It is curious, however, that the rural felicity is marvellously under-valued by those factory-slaves who have had experience of it. There are men in the manufacturing towns (emigrants from agricultural villages and farm-labour) who will *starve*—there have been men who have starved—rather than commit an act of vagrancy that would send them back to the rural felicity of their native parishes. "It may be matter of question," says Dr. Cooke Taylor, in his "Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire"—

—"whether the circumstances surrounding the manufacturing labourer are better or worse than those belonging to the agricultural condition, but there can be no doubt that the former are preferred by the operative. In the present severe pressure of commercial distress there are scores, and probably hundreds of workmen, whom the authorities would gladly send back to their parishes, if they could bring them legally under the designation of paupers; but these men submit to the pressure of hunger, and all its attendant sufferings, with an iron endurance which nothing can bend, rather than be carried back to an agricultural district. However severe the condition of the manufacturing operative may be, *there is a something behind which he dreads more*; he clings to his new state with desperate fidelity, and faces famine rather than return to the farm."

"Rural felicity," indeed, and "Corn-Laws for ever!" We have all heard something of the horrible Northleach Prison. It was but the other day, that the Chairman of the Gloucester Sessions told the world, "He was convinced that the diet in

this prison was not too little for the amount of labour required in return; the work was *not so hard* as that performed by the ordinary day-labourer, while the diet was, in most cases, SUPERIOR." Rural felicity! *But we can't live on a pleasant country, Ma'am*, as the poor woman said to Miss Sedgwick, who congratulated her on the beauty of the scenery with which her cottage was surrounded: "we can't live on a pleasant country." Let us try to understand, with some definiteness, what this rural felicity is. The subject may seem not to have much to do with the Corn-Law; but it really has a great deal to do with it. If the landlord monopoly is to be allowed to finish the ruin of our trade and manufactures, it is well we should know what the landlords mean to do with the people; what they are doing with the people; what ideas landlords have of human rights, and of the conditions of human happiness. They denounce machinery and factory-labour as a national curse and nuisance: let us see what labour is without machinery, and far away from all sight and sound of factories. They say the abolition of monopoly would ruin the happiness and morality of the agricultural labourer, by transferring the demand for labour from agriculture to manufactures, and transforming ploughmen into mechanics: let us see if the agricultural labourer is in a condition in which the transference and transformation would or could be ruin. Monopolists, by their insane invectives against machinery and manufactures, have made the condition of their own agricultural labourers an element of the question; and an element of the question let it be. Let us try, then, to understand what this rural felicity they tell of—to support which monopoly must be supported—really is. Suppose we could get one of their Buckinghamshire or Dorsetshire serfs to speak for himself, and tell us what he thinks of life and the world, of landlords and farmers, of heaven and earth—how men and things look to him through the medium of seven shillings a-week and potatoes. The recent labours of the Anti-Corn-Law League—and no part of their labours is better deserving of public appreciation and support—enable us to do this. The League has lately instituted a mission of in-

quiry into the physical, intellectual and moral condition of the agricultural population, the results of which are of profound interest, alike to the economist, the moralist and the future historian : and if you will allow me, I will give you, from the journal of their missionary, a full-length picture, taken from the life, of one of these potato-fed serfs of the soil, whom free trade would rob of his rural felicity and degrade into a Lancashire mechanic. In the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* of the 10th of last January, I find, under the heading, "Reuben's Report of the Condition of the Agricultural Districts," the following account of a conversation between the Reporter and a Dorsetshire labourer:—

No. 22. A labourer putting flints on the highway is spoken with shortly after leaving No. 21. He says he has eight shillings a-week, and has received notice that after next week he will only have seven. Says he saw me talking to old —, and would like to know what *he* said about wages. Is told that we talked of many things, but I forgot to mention wages. The labourer asks what I did talk about to the "*old un*." I reply that I talked to him about his manner of keeping accounts, whether he was particular in writing everything down. To which No. 22 says, "And what did *old un* say to thee?" "He said he did not keep any accounts, he trusted to his memory." "And," says No. 22, "what did thou say to he?" "I said it was not proper to trust everything to one's memory, that a man could not conduct his business properly unless he kept his accounts correctly." "And what did *old un* say to thee then?" "He said he never forgot anything." "Never forgot nothing!" exclaimed the labourer, as if highly amused with his examination, and my replies. "Never forgot nothing!" he again repeated, "no, *old un* be not likely to forget nothing as will put a penny in his pocket, and keep it out of another man's. *Old un* won't forget that he told his men last week he would take them down a shilling; but he be's as long as a journey from here to London on a pig's back, afore his memory be's good enough to raise wages at the time he promises when he takes 'em down?" And having thus spoken, No. 22 applied himself with great vigour to his work. Observing at this moment a person at some distance, walking by himself, and supposing that he was some other farmer whom I had not seen, I called the man's attention to him, and inquired if he knew him, and if he was a farmer? After standing a minute, and scanning the person as narrowly as the trees would permit, the labourer said, "That be the *old un*'s master? that be all our masters. The *old un* be as much afraid of that un as any of we. That be the old lord himself; *he* be a precious hard screw on a poor man. He just be down from London.—Ah! you be a precious lot o' hard screws on a poor man, the whole lot of you be." "Which lot?

You seem to include me, and yet you don't know who or what I am." "Don't I though? I see you ha' got a good coat on your back, and a face that don't look like an empty belly; there be no hunger looking out atween your ribs, I'll swear. You either be a farmer, or somebody else that lives on somebody else. May be you be a lord, for aught I know on; or a squire, or a parson—dang it—you be a parson perhaps. One thing I see, you ben't one of them as works fourteen hours a-day to feed lords, and squires, and parsons, and farmers; dang the farmers, they be the worst of the lot of ye." "Why do you think so? Why do you think the farmers are the worst?" "Why! what need of me to tell you why? You wouldn't believe me wur I to tell why? but I dare say you know without telling. I dare say you be one of them as has your daughter, an' you ha' a daughter, playing on the piano on a Saturday night, to drown the noise of them brutes of labouring men, what come to get their wages through a hole in the wall; what cannot be allowed to set foot within a farmer's house now-a-days; what must be paid through an opening in the partition, lest they defile the house of a master what gets rich as they get poor; a master that must get his daughter to play music lest the voice of a hard-working man be heard through the hole in the wall! Ah! it be enough to drive men mad; it ha' made men think on things they never would ha' thought on." "But," said I, "you are wrong in supposing every person to be your enemy who is not one of yourselves. Do you speak of a farmer in particular who pays his men through a hole in the wall, while his daughter plays the piano inside, or do you say all the farmers do so?" "Oh, you know, master, what I mean, you be not such a stranger here as you would make me believe." "Did you ever see me before?" "I ha' seed enough o' thee, I dare say. I dare say you be about to go and tell all you heerd me say now. I dare say you be one of 'em as come from London to kill game, that a poor man, like I, must not look at. Ah! I don't care; we must just go on. We be all like to have justice sometime; there ben't no noblemen in heaven, they say." "Is there not? And will there be any *poor* there?" "Not an' the rich can help it; not an' the rich can keep the poor out, I should think. But I be told no rich be to get there neither." "Who says so—the parson?" "Oh, I ben't no friend of the parsons." "Who is it that gives you this information about religion? You go to church, I suppose?" "Yes, I go." "And why are you no friend of the parson?" "The parson be no friend to me." "Why?" "Because he ben't." "But why is he not. Is it not the parson who says the poor are those who have the best chance of the kingdom of heaven?" "But who believes what the parson says?" "Don't you believe what he says?" "Believe what?" "Believe what he preaches. Don't you believe what he says about heaven?" "Why should I?" "Why should you? Why should you go to church, if you don't believe what the parson says?" "Because I can't help going to church." "Why cannot you help going? No one compels you to go, I should think?" "Don't they though! I wouldn't have no work here, if I didn't; nor I wouldn't

get no wood to burn, nor no turf brought home from the common. I know them as have been kept from cutting turf on the common, because they didn't go to church." "So you go to protect yourself in these privileges; but suppose I were to go and tell the parson what you say, as you have supposed I would do, what would be the consequence to you? You don't seem to be afraid to speak your mind?" "Ah! I ben't like to be much longer here; I be like to try my hand in another part of the country. Seven shillings won't do; eight wur bad enough, but seven won't do."

That is the labourer's share of monopoly: seven shillings a week here, *blank* hereafter. "It won't do," says the poor fellow; "eight shillings were bad enough, but seven won't do." Truly, it won't do: but then it must be made to do, if monopoly is to go on making employment scarce, and food dear and hard to come by. He will "try his hand in another part of the country." Alas! he may as well stay at home: all parts of the country are coming to be very much alike, under the stoppage and stagnation of our national industry. Not a chance, not a gleam of hope is there for these poor wretches, while monopoly blocks up trade and vetoes industry. They are wretched because their labour is cheap; and their labour is cheap because the market in which they sell it is overcrowded, and monopoly says there shall not be a market for them elsewhere. Agriculture does not want them, agriculture cannot employ them; and monopoly says that manufactures shall not employ them. There had used to be Lancashire open to these poor creatures: monopoly is destroying Lancashire. They had a chance once in the sea-port towns: monopoly has pauperised the sea-port towns; England's mercantile navy lies rotting in dock, to be sold cheap. Monopoly has stopped that tide of migration which, for forty years past, has thrown thousands and thousands, swarm after swarm, of the poor of agricultural parishes on the manufacturing and sea-port towns. The monopoly obstruction of commerce has turned that tide: and there they are, pent up, crowded together, on the soil where they were born—useless as labourers, burdensome as pauper consumers, starving one another down to the lowest point at which soul and body can be kept together, ripening for crime—driven, by the madness

that waits on misery, *to think on things they never would have thought on.*

Of course I do not mean to say that monopoly is the actual cause of all that is bad in the condition of the agricultural labourer. Agricultural labour, being mainly unskilled labour, always must be at or near the bottom of the scale of wages and comfort. But monopoly aggravates and perpetuates all that is bad in the labourer's condition. Monopoly shuts out all prospect and possibility of amelioration. Monopoly destroys the only thing that can ever mend his condition—that demand for labour elsewhere which would thin his market of a destructive competition, and make his six days' work worth more than seven shillings. The connexion of cause and effect may seem remote, but it is real and actual: the condition of the Dorsetshire serf in his rural parish is better or worse in the long run, as the prices of cotton goods rise or fall on Manchester exchange. For the more profits a manufacturer gets, the more funds he has for paying labour, the more demand he has for labour; and as the demand for labour rises, the condition of the labourer rises. It was the nearly uniform testimony of the farmers examined before the House of Commons' Committees on agricultural distress, in the years 1833 and 1836, that the condition of the agricultural labourer was better then, in those years of agricultural distress and commercial prosperity, than it had ever been before. Agricultural distress—the distress, that is, of universal plenty and cheapness—was new life to the agricultural labourer: it made his little wages go a long way; it increased the demand for labour all through the country, increased the fund for the wages of labour, and drafted off to manufacturing and sea-port towns the multitudes that agriculture cannot employ, and that else stay at home to ruin one another by competition. If any ray of hope is ever to visit those poor miserable creatures who are starving out a joyless, loveless existence in Dorsetshire and Buckinghamshire on seven shillings a-week, believing neither in man below nor in God above—it must come, it only can come, from the abolition of monopoly producing a revival

of trade and manufactures, stimulating the demand for labour, raising the price of labour, and making man to be something more than a drug on the market.

The agricultural labourer has no interest in the monopoly which makes him and his labour cheap. And it would be hard to say who really is interested in it. Not even the landlord himself, by whom and for whom monopoly is made and retained—not even the landlord has a real, enduring interest in monopoly. It may artificially raise his rents, for so long as the country has strength to stand under the incubus; but where will rents go if trade and manufactures go? If the revenue goes on falling, and pauperism goes on rising, where will the landlord be then, with the tax-gatherer working him on one side to make up deficit, and the parish working him on the other to pay the paupers? Can ROBERT SHALLOW, Esq. (as our friend the Corn-Law Rhymer dubs him) not see this? There his land is, and there it will stay; and before he can touch a shilling of his rent, the paupers must be paid, and the Queen's taxes must be paid: and what will Robert Shallow, Esq. think of himself and his Corn-Law then? Hitherto, Manchester and Sheffield have drawn off the paupers, and paid them wages, and made them good, well-to-do landlords' customers and tax-paying subjects: what if Manchester and Sheffield should have no more any wages to pay? Why, Robert Shallow, Esq. will then and thenceforth be a sort of managing steward or official assignee of his own acres, receiving rents *in trust*, first, for the poor of the parish—with remainder, in trust, for her Majesty's Commissioners of the property and income-tax—with a very contingent and remote reversionary interest for himself, in such residue as Pauperism and Majesty may happen to have no immediate occasion for. The men are mad, who, owning land in a country like this, make and maintain laws for the sake of rents, which limit employment and obstruct commerce and manufactures. It is commerce and manufactures that make their rents. The commercial and manufacturing activity of the last half century has nearly everywhere doubled rents: and the land-tax and county-rate returns show, that in particular localities, situated

in the immediate vicinity of commercial and manufacturing towns, rents have been raised in various proportions, ten, twenty, a hundred and a thousand fold. And yet nothing will serve them but they must make laws to screw rents up higher still; at the risk of destroying, at the certainty of fatally impairing and enfeebling that on which their getting rent at all depends. Never was selfishness so insanely suicidal. They grasp, with blind, blundering rapacity, at a little temporary, artificial prosperity, at the cost of exhausting and drying up the sources of a permanent and natural prosperity. They elect to live in a declining country instead of a growing country; to surround themselves with poverty instead of wealth; to pauperise their customers; to kill the goose (if the goose is goose enough to let itself be killed) that lays their golden eggs. Never did men better deserve the ruin they are making for themselves than the landlord monopolists of England. The misfortune of it is, they cannot be ruined alone; they cannot be ruined first; it is by *our* poverty that they will be impoverished—through *us* of the trading and working classes will the ruin pass, before it reaches them.

And now let us look away from these economical and fiscal mischiefs of monopoly—the limitation of trade, the annihilation and extinction of capital, the prostration of national industry, and decay of national revenue—let us look away from these to the moral mischiefs and miseries that grow out of these. For *HERE* is the heart of the evil. The facts and figures expressive of declining revenue, and increasing bankruptcy and pauperism, take their most fearful significance from the social miseries, the moral degradation, the bankruptcy of happiness and character, the pauperism of heart and soul, of which they are ultimately representative. It is not the destruction of money-capital alone that is the vice and curse of monopoly, but destruction of human happiness, and of the elements of which happiness consists; the deterioration of human character; the wearing down, in the hearts of myriads of our population, of all moral self-respect and manly

self-dependence; the breaking-up of happy homes, the dissolution and extinction of home habits and virtues. "Commercial depression! manufacturing distress!" Have the wealthy and the noble, who only hear of these but feel them not, ever realized to their thoughts the facts which these so familiar phrases represent? Take distress in its simplest and mildest form—as a mere *decline of wages*—and see what is in and under this decline of wages. It seems a small thing to the men of thousands and tens of thousands—five shillings more or less in a working man's weekly wages—but what is it? It is the falling away of one little luxury and superfluity after another, that once made life sweet and pleasant. It is the cutting off and paring down, one by one, of the comforts and decencies that make life civilised and human. It is the pawning of books, clothes and furniture (memorials of happy days gone to come no more again) to pay rent and buy potatoes. It is the taking away of children from school, to save the school-money. It is the compelling of the parent to sell the children's limbs cheap, to keep the family from starving. It is the being driven to lodge in cheap and comfortless dwellings, crowded against all the laws of physical and moral health. It is the being doomed to a coarse, hard, bare way of living, in which there is no variety, no ornament, no superfluity (and what is life worth to any man without superfluities?), no power of exercising and gratifying kind affections—in which a dull, dry, dead monotony of toil and diet blunts the feelings, sours the temper, stupifies the intellect, extinguishes the humanities, impoverishes, degrades and brutalises the soul. **THIS** is manufacturing "depression and distress."

Perhaps it is most distressing when the process of mental and moral deterioration is *resisted*—as it nobly has been and is resisted by thousands and thousands of our great manufacturing population of Lancashire; when the memory of happier and better days, while adding tenfold keenness to misery, gives the self-respect and moral strength that endure misery, and that hold on still by the wreck of a happiness that is gone; when (as it is described by Dr. Taylor, in that

volume from which I have already quoted) children in *rags*, but not in *fith*; beds of hay, straw and shavings, *kept scrupulously clean*; charity thankfully accepted, but not solicited; a misery intense and fearful, but not disgusting; a distress afflicting to the sympathies, but not revolting to the senses nor shocking to the fastidiousness of taste,—bear witness to virtues that have survived from happier days, and mark a moral elevation, dignity and self-respect which no extremity of physical suffering can subdue.

Dr. Taylor says—

“ I have seen misery in many forms; I have been in the huts and hovels of Ireland, when my native land was visited with the fearful scourge of cholera; I have visited the cellars of Liverpool, where existence assumes an aspect which ceases to be human; I have penetrated into the wynds and vennels of Glasgow, localities which would try to the uttermost the hardest of hearts and the strongest of stomachs;—but nowhere have I seen misery which so agonized my very soul as that which I have witnessed in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire. And why? Because the extreme of wretchedness was there, and there only, combined with a high tone of moral dignity, a marked sense of propriety, a decency, cleanliness and order, the elements which produced the vast wealth I have described, and which do not merit the intense suffering I have witnessed. I was beholding the gradual immolation of the noblest and most valuable population that ever existed in this country or in any other under heaven. We are not stocks and stones. I am as firmly persuaded as I am of my own existence, that if the noble and wealthy had witnessed the scenes which I have gone through, they would fling all prejudices and selfish interest to the winds, they would stretch forth eager hands to raise the sufferers, pour oil and wine into the wounds they have inflicted, and devote the whole of their energies, heart and soul, to prevent the recurrence of such misery.”

I believe they would. I am sure they would. They would subscribe most handsomely. But would they repeal monopoly? would they liberate commerce? would they unchain industry? Those Lancashire men do not want any pouring in of oil and wine. It is not a case for Good Samaritans. They neither ask charity nor need it: they stand for JUSTICE. They ask to have their hands untied. They ask to be let do what they

will with their own. They ask to be let earn their bread honestly. They ask that monopoly shall no more stop the way of their and their children's food. They ask to have the landlords' lock taken off the bonded warehouses in Liverpool, that they may go buy and barter. Let the noble and the wealthy monopolists be just to these men; and they may keep their charity for those that want it more—their own wretched, barbarised, brutalised seven-shillings-a-week serfs.

But distress will do its work of demoralisation at last, however long and noble the resistance. It cannot be that a distressed and miserable people shall permanently remain a virtuous people: the thing is not in nature. The very statistics of police, the dull, dry figures of the official returns that record the number of annual commitments show this. In 1834, 22,400 commitments, with wheat at 46*s.*; in 1835, 20,700 commitments, with wheat at 39*s.*; in 1841, 27,700 commitments, with wheat at 64*s.*:—the scale of crime slides up and down, as the scale of prices slides up and down; and it is not in nature that it should be otherwise. You may extend the church for them, as Sir Robert Peel suggests; but it will not do. Churches by the hundred and preachers by the thousand will neither moralise nor evangelise starving men. The very faculties and affections of our nature to which religion appeals, and whose highest development and expression is religion, wither under the blight of misery. The “fair day's wages for the fair day's work”—this is the basis and beginning, the *sine quâ non* condition preliminary of all morality, all self-respect, all intellectual culture, all religion;—and the fair day's wages for the fair day's work can only come of commercial and industrial emancipation. If they are in earnest with their extension of religion and the church, let them begin with an extension of employment and food: else they may build a church in every street, and pay a chaplain for every house; but while misery lasts, vice and crime will last; while misery grows, vice and crime will grow. Severe, continuous, grinding misery sours the temper, chills the

affections, hardens the heart, darkens the intellect, gathers like an incrustation over the soul; shuts out all perception of truth, all delight in beauty, all reverence for goodness; generates recklessness, ferocity, despair. And when with the endurance of misery is combined the sense of wrong; when the suffering man feels and knows himself to be an injured man; when he has lost, as lose he must, all moral respect for an authority that selfishly and sordidly robs him first to starve him afterwards; what can come of it, sooner or later, first or last, but that which the tongue refuses to enunciate, and which the heart turns away from contemplating?

This is THE mischief of monopoly. It is here that the curse which ever is in wrong concentrates itself and works its worst. Mind is perishing under this base, bad law. They are pauperising men's hearts and souls. They are robbing this generation of Englishmen and Englishwomen of their moral self-respect, and of the virtues which without self-respect cannot live: they are robbing the coming generation of that education without which the virtues cannot so much as begin to be. Of the boys and girls that a few years hence will be the men and women, the people of England, thousands and tens of thousands have been plundered, year by year, these five years past, of that which is childhood's best education—a cheerful, industrious and virtuous home: they have no home but the union-house; their home habits, virtues and affections are gone; their young hearts are poisoned; they are now the pauper children of pauper parents, degraded and demoralised, beginning life on mendicancy and parish pay. No arithmetic shall compute this mischief, no statistics shall measure it; and when it is fully done, no legislation will undo it.

And therefore it is that we would stop the growing curse before it is full-grown, by asking all honest men to league themselves, hand to hand and heart to heart, and say before heaven and earth, IT SHALL NOT BE ANY MORE. Stay the plague, while there is time to stay it; cut off this entail of pauper misery and pauper crime, which will go down else to

the third and fourth generations, and make Britain one vast parish workhouse. Down with the monopoly barrier that stands between industry and its reward, between hunger and its food, between a fair day's work and a fair day's wages, between a people's prayer for bread and a Creator's bounty.

LECTURE V.

MONDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 1843.

THE ECONOMICS AND MORALS OF FREE TRADE.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, in the debate last year on the new Tariff—and strange enough the saying must have sounded in the ears of certain of his supporters, who did not know that it was for that exactly they had made him minister—Sir Robert Peel said, in that debate, “I believe that on the general principle of free trade there is now no great difference of opinion, and that all agree in the general rule that we should buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.” And it was only last week that one of Sir Robert Peel’s Cabinet (equally, one would think, to the amazement of the bucolic section of his auditory) said, “No one on this side of the House will now question the principles of free trade—they are the principles of common sense.” They *are* the principles of common sense: and yet we are told that we must wait for some period of unknown and unknowable duration, some *interval* of unspecified length, of which the only information we possess is that it is to be somewhat under a millennium, somewhat within a “revolution of ages”—before these common-sense principles are to be applied in practice. This “interval” we may, I think, profitably employ—and it may be that so employing it may greatly assist to abridge it, and reduce the somewhat less than a millennium into somewhat less than twelve months—we may profitably employ this interval in examining the principles of

free trade, and seeing for ourselves that they are the principles of common sense; as they are the principles also of common honesty. These common-sense principles stand all the better chance of an early and thorough practical application, the more distinctly the common sense of the people understands them, and the more loudly the common voice of the people demands their embodiment in a system of common-sense legislation. With this view I now invite you to consider the subject of this evening's Lecture—the Economics and Morals of Free Trade.

The Freedom of Trade follows, as a direct and necessary corollary, from the nature of trade itself. Trade has been defined—and the definition is the exactest and completest that I know of—as the *mutual relief of wants by the exchange of superfluities*. This is the *rationale* of trade, of every kind and degree; from the rude, primitive barter which the Indian hunter on the outskirts of Anglo-American civilization carries on with the European merchant-settler, giving skins and furs, and receiving guns and knives, up to the gigantic operations of the export and import trade of Great Britain. The definition holds of every act of trade, and gives the true theory of the trading process:—one man's want relieves itself by exchange with another man's superfluity. And this is what constitutes the profitableness of trade—its profitableness to both parties. When the beaver's skin is bartered for the gun, when the barrel of flour is exchanged for the cutlery, when printed calicoes go out that chests of tea may come in—both parties gain by the exchange. Each of these things *rises in value* (quite independently of any labour that may be expended on it), acquires a new worth, a new relation to human wants, and power of ministering to human enjoyment, by the simple fact of locomotion. It goes from where it is not wanted to where it is wanted; from being useless it becomes useful; mutual superfluities have relieved mutual wants. The benefits of commerce are reciprocal, and the gain of one party is the gain of both.

This is the *rationale* of trade;—the relief of wants by the

exchange of superfluities. And the freedom of trade; the unrestricted liberty of every man to buy, sell and barter, when, where and how, of whom and to whom he pleases; to buy in the cheapest market he can find and sell in the dearest market he can find—the freedom of trade is a corollary from the very nature of trade. To “buy in the cheapest market”—what is it, but to take your want to the place where the thing wanted exists in the greatest superfluity? To “sell in the dearest market”—what is it, but to take your superfluity to the place where it is most wanted? This common-sense maxim of commercial prudence—or, if you like, of commercial selfishness and avarice—is thus exactly coincident with the dictates of the most enlarged and disinterested benevolence. This “buying in the cheapest market to sell again in the dearest,” savours, certainly, more of counting-house prudence than of philanthropy: yet what is it, in fact and effect, but to take the products of the earth and the creations of human skill and toil from the place where they are least wanted to the place where they are most wanted—from the place where they minister the least, to the place where they minister the most to human good and enjoyment? The capitalist who buys corn when and where it is cheap and plentiful, to sell it again when and where it is scarce and dear, who waits for dearth and scarcity that he may sell it to the best advantage; the man who buys barrels of beef and pork in Louisiana, where they rot in the streets breeding yellow fever, to sell again at a profit to those Lancashire spinners who are forgetting the taste of beef and pork, receiving the price in large quantities of the superfluous calicoes that cram their warehouses, to sell these again at a profit to the ill-dressed people in Louisiana—this man may think little enough about philanthropy, but he really does a philanthropist’s work; his thoughts may all run on making a fortune, but his act is a benefaction to his species. And beautiful it is, beautiful as wonderful (such are the natural laws of trade), how every transaction of commercial interchange, though prompted by the lowest and coarsest motives of self-interest, ministers, in fact and result, to ge-

neral human good, as effectually as if the most godlike benevolence had presided over it; more effectually than any mere benevolence would have done, undirected by intelligence and knowledge.

This is the *rationale* of free trade. The freedom of trade is of the very essence of trade: it is required by the nature of trade. The freer trade is, the better it fulfils the end of trade. Freedom of trade, buying in the cheapest market to sell in the dearest, is neither more nor less than relieving the wants that most need relief, by drawing supplies from where they exist in the greatest superfluity. These are the general principles of free trade; which, as they are now the acknowledged principles of common sense, it might seem needless to attempt any formal statement of, were it not for that unfortunate "interval" which is destined to precede common-sense legislation;—which interval it must be the part of all common-sense people to do their utmost to abridge.

And now what shall we say of that thing called monopoly, prohibition, restriction—or, in smooth monopolist phrase, *protection*; that is, making people buy at a high price, of some particular protected individuals, what might be bought of other unprotected individuals at a low price? What shall we say of it, but that it is against the very nature and first laws of trade, a contradiction to the principles of common sense. It is a dead loss and robbery. It is obliging human want to relieve itself at a larger expenditure than need be of toil, or of that which represents toil—the difference being so much waste. Suppose the law makes you pay—and the law does make you pay (taking one year with another)—9*d.* for the bread which you might have for 6*d.*, by obliging you to buy your bread of a particular set of people in this country, instead of buying it of other people in other countries: what does the law in this case but rob you of 3*d.* to give it to those people; rob you of the labour which that 3*d.* represents; rob you of the strength which that labour cost you; rob you of the well and fairly earned enjoyment which that 3*d.* might have purchased for you; and rob, too, the industry on which you might otherwise have spent that 3*d.*, of its

natural stimulus and reward. Every loaf of bread bought under such a law is bought at a loss: a loss measured by the difference between what it might cost and what it does cost—a loss of time, a loss of labour, a loss of enjoyment, a loss of capital. The law compels you to carry on this trade of buying food (the only trade which all men must carry on) at a disadvantage; to buy your food in the dearest market, and sell so much of your labour as goes for food in the cheapest market. The law compels you, in every meal you eat, to commit an outrage on the acknowledged principles of common sense.

And they call this *protecting native industry*. Protecting native industry! It is attacking, invading, plundering native industry. It abridges native industry of its well-earned rest and enjoyment. It hinders native industry from getting its full natural reward. It compels native industry to give more than it need give, and receive less than it might receive; to buy in a dear market and sell in a cheap market. Native industry! is not one man's native industry as good as another's? Is not the bread I get over from America in exchange for my cottons as much a product of native industry as the bread which another man makes of the corn of his own farm? The one is native industry just the same as the other: and the law which gives an unfair advantage to the one native industry, and subjects the other to an unfair disadvantage, is a law not for protecting native industry, but for invading, oppressing and taxing native industry. You may say, 'It protects the industry employed in the production of the dear bread.' But what sort of an industry is that which is employed in making at a great expense what might be made at a small expense? What sort of a native agricultural industry is that which causes two loaves to be where there might be three? We do not want such industry. It is a private folly, and a public mischief. Such industry is a bungling, wasteful loss of so much time, strength and capital. To protect such industry is to force one man to pay another man for carrying on a losing trade. Supposing, for argument's sake—I do not recognise the supposition as a fact,

but supposing that what the food monopolists tell us is true—that they could not grow corn in the face of a free foreign competition, what would that prove but that the business of corn-growing in England is naturally a losing business, a business which nature never intended should be carried on in England, a business which only absorbs capital and labour from other channels of employment that would yield a better return. I know of no reason for thinking that this is true: but if this be true, the corn-growing business in England is no other than a national waste and loss.

On this absurd principle of protecting people in doing at home, at a great expense, things that might be done for us abroad at a small expense, we should have no commerce whatever: for there are very few, I imagine, if any, of the products even of our remotest commerce, but what we might manage somehow to make for ourselves. Our tea, sugar and spices we might grow in hot-houses; excellent port wine might no doubt be had, of native growth, at somewhere about a guinea a bottle; and our civic feasts might make a tolerable show of native turtle, bred under cover, in water artificially heated and artificially salted—all to protect native industry and be independent of foreigners:—after which it would only be necessary, in order to carry out the principle completely, that every man should make his own shoes, with leather of his own dressing, off animals of his own breeding; stitch his own shirt, with linen of his own weaving, of flax of his own growing; build his own house; cut out his own coat; kill and cook his own mutton—all to protect household industry and be independent of his next-door neighbour. There are no limits to the absurdities to which this absurd principle leads, of setting people to make dear at home what they might buy cheap abroad, and calling it “protection of native industry.” The whole thing is an enormous national waste and loss: a pernicious misdirection of the particular industry so protected, and a monstrous aggression on the rights of all other industry. It cannot be repeated too often, for though the principles of free trade are the principles of

common sense, common sense is in some matters a very uncommon thing—every monopoly, prohibition, protection (or call it what you will) which makes a thing cost more than it need cost, which drives a man to buy dear at home the food which he might buy cheap abroad, and sell cheap here the labour which he might sell dear elsewhere, extinguishes at every turn so much of the nation's wealth, plunders at every turn so much of the nation's industry, of its just and fair reward.

The theory of monopoly and protection is, that the government undertakes, at the nation's expense, to support a certain set of individuals in what is naturally a losing business ; undertakes to make the nation pay those individuals for doing at a great expense what other and unprotected individuals elsewhere would be glad to do at a small expense. This is the theory of protection. The practical result of it is often considerably different from this. Protection has again and again been given to businesses that are not naturally losing ; that might do extremely well without protection, and stand their ground against any competition. The effect of protection then is to make the naturally good business, actually a bad business. The protection is a bounty on idleness and improvidence ; it prevents improvement ; it withdraws all stimulus from the ingenuity, skill and zeal that make improvements ; it protects a system of costly and careless mismanagement : for why should a man trouble himself to improve his processes, to economise capital and cheapen production, when the state undertakes that—improvement or no improvement—competition shall not come near him ? The consequence is that *all protected trades*, with scarcely an exception, are and have been *suffering and losing trades* ; and again and again it has happened that the loss of the protection has, by stimulating energies before undeveloped, and leading to improvements before unimagined, turned out to be a great and enduring gain to all parties. The English silk-manufacture, under monopoly, was the worst and dearest in the world ; under freedom, it has become the greatest in Europe. Mr. Huskisson tells us, in his Speech on the silk-manufacture,

in the year 1826—that speech which has done more than perhaps any single speech of statesman ever did, to fix the future policy of the country—that, under the old monopoly, when all importation of manufactured silks was prohibited (and smuggled, or supposed smuggled silk things were liable to seizure on the very person of the wearer, at the suggestion of any informer), the criterion by which the Custom-House discriminated foreign goods from English, was their superior quality and workmanship. If the suspected silk-handkerchief exceeded, in quality and texture, a certain very moderate standard of excellence, if it lacked the signs of genuine British slovenliness and flimsiness—the Treasury would vote it contraband without more ado, and confiscate it for the protection of native industry. Nothing good could come out of Coventry or Spitalfields. Within a few months after our manufacturers received notice of the loss of their monopoly-protection, this test of slovenliness became inapplicable: it became no longer possible (as is curiously shown in a very striking anecdote given in the speech I have alluded to) to tell French make from English make, the one being as good and workmanlike as the other. From that time, the English silk-manufacture steadily grew in extent and excellence: and by the end of four or five years, we were actually *exporting* manufactured silks—exporting to France, whose competition had been the great bugbear and peril of the protected. The truth is, this British silk-manufacture, instead of being ruined, was actually saved—in the exactest sense of the word, *protected*—by exposure to competition throwing the manufacturers on their own resources, and stimulating efforts before untried and improvements before unthought of.

And why should not the same thing happen in the British corn-manufacture as in the British silk-manufacture? Why should not our agriculture, too, thrive and grow under the stimulus of competition? Not that I consider it at all necessary to prove this, in order to make out a case against monopoly. If British agriculture is a thing that exists only by the tenure of artificial scarcity and dearth; if British agriculture consists in British people having less bread to eat than

they might have, and having to pay more labour for their bread than they need pay—British agriculture is neither more nor less than a British nuisance. There seems no real reason, however, why British agriculture, when its energies and resources are brought out as they never have been brought out yet, and, under monopoly, never can be brought out—why it should not be the best and cheapest in the world. I do not pretend to any practical knowledge of agriculture; but, as Sir James Graham says, the principles of free trade are the principles of common sense; and common sense is usually right, on the whole and in the long run. There are plenty of practical men, however (it may be enough to name Mr. George Hope of Haddington, whose Essay on “Agriculture and the Corn-Law” constitutes a part of that little Library of Useful Knowledge now in process of circulation by the League)—there are practical men, skilled and experienced agriculturists, men whose opinions are every way worthy of respect, who tell us that agriculture will do better without monopoly than with it; that monopoly is the great foe to agricultural improvement; that the thing most wanted, to draw out all the unexhausted resources of the British soil and its cultivators, is the competition of a free trade in corn. And why not? With a soil fitted to yield and bring to perfection a greater number and variety of animal and vegetable products necessary for the support of life, than any other soil in Europe; with a climate which allows of more hours of open-air labour throughout the year, than any other; with the best and cheapest labour in the world (reckoning the excellent quality of that labour as one element of cheapness); with the best market in the world ever close at hand; with the cheapest and quickest means of transit and conveyance in the world; with the largest amount of capital, skill and mechanical invention available for improvement;—one does not see why British agriculture should shrink from foreign competition. Great Britain has all the natural elements of high agricultural prosperity.

They talk of the *taxes*: ‘Great Britain is more heavily taxed than other countries, and so British industry cannot

compete on equal terms with foreign industry.' But British industry *does* compete with foreign industry, taxes notwithstanding. Taxation does not prevent our producing other things cheap. We have cheaper coal and iron than other countries, cheaper steam-engines, cheaper cotton goods, cheaper newspapers, cheaper communication, we are cheaper than foreigners in all the fifty millions' worth of goods that we annually ship off to foreign markets; and why should we not have cheaper agriculture, if agriculture had fair play, and were protected from the blight of monopoly? English commercial and manufacturing industry competes well enough with foreign, taxes notwithstanding: and why not English agricultural industry?—which, instead of being more taxed in proportion than commerce and manufactures (as they used to have the effrontery to assert, though lately they have learned to be more careful what they assert on this point), is in fact less taxed in proportion than commerce and manufactures—is most unfairly and perniciously privileged in the matter of taxation. Great Britain more heavily taxed than other European countries? Certainly *Yes*, if you look at the mere amount of money paid annually into the Treasury: but probably *No*, if you take into account Great Britain's immensely superior capital and tax-paying power. As regards this matter of taxation, the truth is (as is most excellently shown in the Letters of Diogenes to Sir Robert Peel,) we of Great Britain have a heavier annual revenue to make up than the continental nations, simply because we conducted our war expenditure during the last tremendous European struggle in a more business-like way than the continental nations. We borrowed and paid interest, leaving the general industry of the country still active and growing, and allowing the resources of the country a free development:—the continental nations resorted to the infinitely more wasteful and costly methods of confiscation, forced requisitions, free quarters, depreciated currency, and military conscription; which kept down national growth, prevented improvement, and destroyed capital. The same system of management which left us at the end of the last war burdened with an immense debt, left us also with the immense capital

created by twenty-five years of uninterrupted industrial production, and of an industrial security unbroken by the ravages of invading armies. Taking country with country, and comparing the weight of taxation with the capital and resources on which taxation falls, there is no reason whatever for supposing that British industry, agricultural or manufacturing, labours under any disadvantage as compared with the industry of any people of continental Europe. If we had no *private taxes* to pay to the landlords and other monopolists, we could very well manage with all our public taxes.

We are in the habit of talking of Great Britain as an *expensive country to live in*. We seem to have made up our minds to this, as to a natural necessity. We take it for granted. We reconcile ourselves to it with the same sort of unreasoning, unquestioning resignation with which the inhabitants of Catania resign themselves to the vicinity of Etna, and accept life under the conditions which that vicinity involves, of periodical volcanic eruptions and occasional earthquakes. That England is, and will continue, naturally and necessarily, a dear country to live in, is a belief, notion or prejudice which possesses almost universal currency, and which few people ever dream of questioning. Now this so current belief is a sheer fallacy; an utter mistake. A country like England ought to be—is naturally—a cheap country to live in: but monopoly—chiefly the landlord-monopoly, though not it alone—turns natural and possible cheapness into artificial and actual dearth. There is no one point in connexion with the economics of free trade which I would more desire to lodge in your minds than this;—that universal free trade—universal common sense in commercial legislation—would make Great Britain a cheap country to live in. Why not? With our enormous accumulation of capital, our untiring industrial production, our maritime resources and position, our insular location between the markets of northern and central Europe and those of the New World, why should not this country be, for centuries to come, that which Venice was once, and Holland since—the emporium of the trade of the world; the wholesale warehouse of nations; our merchants the

factors of the world, receiving for distribution the wines of France and Spain, the silks, oils and fruits of Italy and the Levant, the hemp and tallow of Russia, the corn and cotton of America—buying all manner of things at all times, that the earth produces or the hand of man creates, to hold and sell again at factor's profit to every comer:—the wholesale warehouse of nations, *ourselves getting all things at the wholesale price?* Why not? The capital that can buy and hold, the shipping that can fetch and carry, and the insular centrality of geographical position that lies convenient for all comers—these are the natural elements of such a state of things, and these we have: and give these fair play and free scope, and England would be the cheapest of countries to live in and enjoy life in.

This natural cheapness of living in Great Britain is no wild hypothesis, no theoretical conjecture of the free-trade “zealots and fanatics” of the Anti-Corn-Law League. It was the deliberately formed and expressed conviction of one of the most practical of practical men—one of those men whose opinions are entitled (if any man's opinions can be so entitled) to rank as authorities—the late Mr. James Deacon Hume, of the Board of Trade; a name which I can never mention without a lively feeling of gratitude and honour for public services little understood and appreciated, because in fact little known, but in reality of immeasurably more public value than ninety-nine hundredths of the things public men do and get honour and Parliamentary thanks for, with monuments in Westminster Abbey—services directed to no ends of false national glory, and destructive national vanity and ambition, but to the promotion of the physical and material comfort, and, through that, of the intellectual and moral elevation of millions of Englishmen and Englishwomen through successive generations. In Mr. Hume's evidence before the Committee on the Import Duties in the year 1840, I find the following question and answer:—

“I understand you to say, that if there is any difference in the cost of living in this country and in other countries, or that we are under disadvantage in competition with them, it chiefly arises from the protective system?”

—That is my opinion. With our great command of trade, our navigation, our capital, and our geographical position, if trade in this country were perfectly free, and we were enabled to obtain in the cheapest markets, upon even terms, all the commodities we want, *I can see no reason why this should not be one of the cheapest countries to live in that any civilised, populous country can be.* There are many matters in which density of population leads to cheapness."

"There are many matters in which density of population leads to cheapness." One of these matters, in particular, may be worth our thinking of and understanding well: and that is, what to all Englishmen is the very important matter of *taxation*. Density of population tends to cheapness in the matter of taxation. Increase the population, and let that increased population find employment and food, let the increase of population be accompanied with a correspondent increase of national production, wealth and resource; let it be an increase of contented, industrious, well-to-do and happy millions—and in that exact proportion the burden of taxation is diminished. *Double the number of tax-payers, and you halve every man's share of taxation.* The increase of an unemployed and ill-fed population—an increase which takes place in these British Isles at the rate of 1000 a-day—is another thing altogether; and so far from tending to cheapness, in taxation or any thing else, tends to that in presence of which all considerations of cheapness and taxation become utterly trivial and unimportant. In the destructive way we are going on now—intercepting the trade that would employ and feed our growing population,—we are making this growing population a growing tax and a growing peril; we are making ourselves liable to feed as paupers those who might be feeding themselves and enriching the country at the same time; we are approaching a state of things in which density of population, instead of being a source of national wealth, strength and greatness, will bring with it a fearful aggravation of the woes attendant on national weakness and decline.

But let us come back to the matter of taxation, which constitutes a main element of the economics of free trade. We think ourselves heavily taxed in this country. And so

we are; we are crippled, crushed, ground to very dust by taxes. But *what* taxes? Why, *the private taxes*; the monopoly taxes; the taxes which go not into the state treasury, but into the private pockets of the individuals belonging to certain favoured, privileged and petted classes. It is not the public taxes that hurt us; not the interest on the debt, nor the cost of military and naval defence and of the administration of justice: all the sinecures and pensions together are a trifle to a nation like this, except (and an important exception it is) for the immorality of the principle of taking public money on false pretences. It is not these we feel, but the private taxes. These bear us down to the earth: we cannot pay public taxes and private taxes too. Of these private taxes, the most monstrous, both in its money amount and in the iniquity of its principle, is the landlord-tax; the 40, 50, or 60 millions (or whatever the sum may be) which the landlord legislators annually extort from us, by way of protection to agriculture. But this landlord-tax, though holding a bad pre-eminence in guilt and folly, does not stand alone. Let us look at another of these private taxes. Our sugar-refiners here in London import annually vast quantities of good, wholesome raw sugar from Cuba and the Brazils, refine that sugar, and then re-export it, in the refined state, to Canada, Australia, the West Indies, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man—where it is retailed at about 4*d.* a-pound. Now why cannot *we* get any of this London-refined sugar at 4*d.* a-pound? or (adding the public revenue duty of 2½*d.*) why cannot we get good refined sugar at from 6*d.* to 7*d.* a-pound, but must instead pay 11*d.*? Because there is a *private tax* on this Brazil-grown, London-refined sugar, of about 4½*d.* a-pound more, which makes it, under ordinary circumstances, unsaleable in this country. Not a pound of Brazil or Cuba sugar can be consumed in Great Britain till it has paid, first, one tax of 2½*d.* to the state, and then a second tax of 4½*d.* which the little knot or section of individuals called British West India Interest demand for their protection. Now, note the workings of this protection, this private tax. It is a tax *profitless to the*

state, for the simple reason that it is scarcely ever worth a merchant's while to pay it. It is a tax by which the state loses; for if Brazil sugar came in at the same duty with Jamaica sugar, the increased consumption consequent on cheapness would make a greatly increased revenue. It is a loss of revenue to the state, and it is a loss of capital to the people: more than 4*d.* a-pound it is, on all the sugar we buy—wasted, lost, plundered from us by a parcel of insolent, greedy and lazy monopolists. And then the further operation of this protection is to keep down every thing like enterprise, energy and skill, on the part of the protected class: relying on their monopoly, the West India planters never trouble themselves about improvements, but go on idling and dawdling, without an effort at extending production and economising capital and labour. And the consequence of all this is lastly (the worst consequence of all) that we give the most fatal encouragement that can be to slavery and the slave trade. We make the cause of negro emancipation hopeless. We tell all slave-owners throughout the world, that their slave-labour has so much the advantage over our free labour that we dare not admit them to compete with us. We proclaim before the world that our grand act of negro emancipation was a grand blunder in economics, that the stimulus of the whip is of superior efficacy to the stimulus of wages, and that our philanthropists were all wrong, from first to last, in ever dreaming that it could be otherwise. The monopoly is defended by some respectable and honest persons, on the ground that to relax it would be to encourage the slave labour of Brazil, and increase the slave trade. A very narrow and short-sighted view this is. Possibly it might do this: possibly it might not. But it is *certain* that by keeping up the monopoly, by continuing to protect free labour with prohibitory duties—it is certain that by this we encourage slave labour; for it is practically saying that, after trying both, we have discovered that slave labour is the cheapest and best. The short, sure way to put down slave labour is to beat it out of the market by successful competition. Throw our British West Indians on their own

resources, make them exert themselves, stimulate them to the inventions and improvements which only necessity can teach ; and at the same time assist their exertions, as common justice requires, by abolishing all the monopolies and restrictions that tie their hands. The first pound of free-labour sugar that undersells the produce of slave labour in a free and open market, will settle for ever the question of slavery and the slave trade.

But let us follow up a little the economics of this sugar question. We now take British Colonial sugar at a duty of $2\frac{1}{4}d.$ a-pound ; and to protect the British Colonists, we make the Brazil sugar pay nearly $7d.$ a-pound duty. Brazil sugar, cheap as it is, cannot bear this duty : consequently, we get none of it ; we eat only the British Colonial sugar. The British Colonists have thus a monopoly : consequently, they do not trouble themselves about improved processes and cheap production ; consequently, the supply is small, the price is high ; consequently, consumption falls off by some millions of pounds weight ; consequently, revenue falls off by some hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling ; consequently, *we get Income-Tax*. And along with all this—along with the wasted capital, the diminished enjoyment, the deficient revenue, and the new tax, we lose a part and imperil the whole of one of the most valuable of our markets ; we limit the exports of our manufactures ; we stand between our starving Lancashire spinners and their South American customers and employers ; we risk expulsion from a market that takes three millions' worth and more of our manufactures annually. All this, by way of "protection to the British West India Interest."

The late Ministry attempted to abate this nuisance of the sugar monopoly. They proposed to cut down this enormous protection of $4\frac{1}{4}d.$ a-pound to a little more than $1d.$ a-pound ; thus lowering the price of sugars all round, causing more sugar to be consumed, extending the comforts and enjoyments of the poor, adding nearly a million to the revenue, and increasing and securing our trade with the vast empire of Brazil. They went before the country on this issue ; they

said, "Will you have these things, or will you have an income-tax instead?" The country rejected the offer; electoral venality and stupidity said, "No, we won't have these things:" and so we lost the cheap sugar, we lost the extended trade, we lost the additional revenue—we have got the income-tax, and I am glad of it, for we deserve it. The Whig Budget of 1841 was by no means a perfect measure: but it had the transcendent merit of proposing to *increase revenue by lessening taxes*. It offered to the people the alternative of more trade or more taxation, cheaper food or more taxation, a reduction of private taxes or an increase of public taxes. The people rejected the more trade and cheaper food, and chose the more taxation—and we now reap that which we then sowed. We chose to purchase sliding scale, dear sugar, and narrowed export trade—we actually bought these things with Income-Tax. And that Whig Budget, which would have given us two millions more of revenue by merely cutting down a few of the private taxes, was only a beginning; a very poor beginning, we might almost say, considering what might be done. Mr. M'Gregor, of the Board of Trade, handed in to the Committee on the Import Duties a plan of a Tariff which, according to the calculations that his vast official knowledge and experience enabled him to make, would have given six millions more of annual revenue, by this process of cutting down private taxes, lowering prices and extending consumption, diffusing enjoyment and stimulating trade: six millions of additional revenue within our reach, to be got not by laying on taxes, but by taking off taxes. Truly the principles of free trade are principles of common sense: but what shall we say to the principle of telling a suffering people to wait, for an interval of unassigned duration, before common-sense principles are to be applied in practice?

In the Title of this Lecture I have spoken of the *Economics and Morals* of Free Trade. There is in truth no separating these. The free-trade morality is good economy; and the free-trade economics, when taken in connexion with the happiness and the misery of those millions of human

beings whose physical, social and moral well-being is contingent on wise and honest commercial legislation—the economics of free trade, thus viewed, assume a profound moral interest. The “mutual relief of wants by the exchange of superfluities”—there is more in this than the dry definition of a dry science; it is warm with the humanities; it breathes of human misery alleviated, and human happiness extended and diffused. This formula of economical science is a doctrine of brotherhood, a precept of love, a fit expression of the aspirations of philanthropy and the prayers of religion. The relief of mutual wants by the exchange of mutual superfluities—here is the remedy, the obvious, simple, common-sense remedy—the remedy of kind nature’s own providing—for that mass and complication of human miseries and woes, that national distress, under which our beloved England now groans: and why, in the name of a suffering people and a just God, shall it be denied us longer? The remedy for national distress, that they have been talking and talking about for a week together, and told us at last that they cannot find it; that distress must go without remedy—does any man with eyes in his head and a heart in his bosom not *know* where and what that remedy is? The distress is want of employment and want of food: free trade would give employment and food. There the remedy is ready waiting, if cruel monopoly would but stand out of the way—there it is beyond the Ocean. There are the markets that would employ our hands, and the fields that would grow the harvests that would feed our mouths; there are the wants that exactly answer to our superfluities, and the superfluities that precisely meet our wants:—there is the remedy for distress, just twelve days’ sail from our shores, and monopoly stands in the way and says, “No, you shall not have it; not so much as inquiry shall your distress get, to see if remedy be possible; but we are extremely sorry for you, and if you will wait for an interval, perhaps we may do something some time, though we can’t exactly say what or when.” There is a power, thank God! a power of which each one of us wields a portion, by which

this "interval" may be made a very short interval, and the what and the when promptly and satisfactorily decided.

The Morals of Free Trade are wider and deeper even than this simple, elementary morality of applying an obvious remedy to a pressing and acknowledged evil. Free trade would be sound morality still, though there were no distress. The cause of free trade is the cause of *civil liberty*. The right to buy food in the cheapest market and sell labour in the dearest market—what is it but the right of a man to do what he will with his own, with that which is most intimately and truly his own—the sinewy hand, the sweaty brow, the toiling brain? It is the first of all human rights; the right to earn and eat, to labour and enjoy—the right to the pursuit of happiness—the right to do good and to communicate, receiving good again. The cause of free trade is the cause of *political justice*—that justice which, image and representative of a higher justice, knows of no favouritisms or partisanship; makes no distinction of person, party, sect or class; legislates for each and all on the broad and simple principles of equal right; knows nothing of rich or poor, peer or peasant, landowner, merchant, manufacturer or artisan, but only of the citizen and the man. Monopoly cuts away the first and most elementary of our human liberties, and poisons the heart of society and the fountains of law and government with the iniquity of selfish class-legislation.

The cause of free trade is the cause of *peace*; peace at home and peace abroad; peace between class and class, and between nation and nation. The very language of monopoly savours of war. The whole monopoly argument bristles with jealousy, suspicion and enmity. 'Independence of foreigners,' it cries: 'Keep yourselves to yourselves, you foreign people—and we will keep ourselves to ourselves; we don't want you; we will have none of you. We will live shut up here in our own island, and owe you nothing, give you nothing, for fear some day we should be at war.' Why this is the way to be at war: this savage, surly self-isolation is no other than that "armed peace" which is ever on the brink of war. Independence of foreigners, for fear of war!

Better, ten thousand times better, that mutual dependence of free, natural and healthy interchange, which creates and cements interests that are incompatible with war, and that would render war an impossible and suicidal folly. The beneficent mutualities of free commerce are the best guarantee that the world's peace can have. The wide brotherhood of nations, knit together in the reciprocal relief of wants by the reciprocal exchange of superfluities—this is the best of all possible Societies for the Promotion of permanent and universal Peace.

The cause of free trade is the cause of *civilisation*. Civilisation is but another name for the intercommunication of man with man: the extension, freedom and facility of this is the sign and measure of that. Civilisation is the bringing of man near to man, for mutual help and solace; it is the service of man by man. Its tendencies are to the unity of the human race. At every stage in the progress of society, when that progress is let go on in its natural course, undisturbed by man thinking himself wiser than his Maker, and that his devices can mend his Maker's work—at every stage in the natural progress of society and civilisation, we find not exclusion but comprehension, not restriction and isolation but diffusion, not separation but union and aggregation of moral and social forces. The order of social progress is—first, the Family, then the Tribe, then the Nation, and finally that universal human Brotherhood to which all our separate nationalities, while retaining their distinctness, are subordinated as parts to the whole. Every stage of social progress is a widening of that circle within which human industry and genius reciprocate their benefits, and multiply the goods of life by diffusing them. All the discoveries and inventions by which the course of civilisation is marked and chronicled—the wheel-carriage, the ship, the compass, the printing-press, the steam-engine, the iron-railway, the newspaper—all are but so many expedients for bringing man near to man, for uniting the distant and remote, minimising the disjunctive power of time and space, and pouring the diversified treasures of all the nations of the earth into the lap of each. No wonder monopoly *hates machinery*: the good principle and the evil principle,

the Ormusd and Ahriman of the old Persian theology are not more antagonistic than the mechanical invention which creates, multiplies, diffuses and unites, and the monopoly which divides, isolates and destroys. The cause of free trade is the cause of civilisation. It is by free trade that man must fulfil the destiny assigned to him in the original plan of the Creator, of replenishing the earth and subduing it—replenishing it with the creations of his industry, and subduing it to the service of his will.

The economics and morals of free trade present everything that can win the sympathies and engage the support of good and thinking men, and of good and thinking women too. The facts and figures of statistics; the reasonings of speculative philosophy; the dictates of common sense; the lessons of a bitter and sad experience; the cry of suffering and wronged millions; the coldest calculations of the economist and financier, and the most ardent aspirations of the philanthropist and the Christian;—all point to industrial and commercial emancipation as the grand want of the age. Free trade is a universal interest. It belongs not to party, sect or class: it is the cause of ALL; of the richest and of the poorest. Universal suffrage itself goes not half so far, for it leaves out women and children:—this includes women and children; it is not a man's question only, but a woman's question, and a children's question—a question of daily bread, a question of health, a question of life, and of all that makes life worth living.

This free-trade agitation has nothing destructive in its character, otherwise than as every effort towards the right and true is destructive of the wrong and false. Its aim is not destruction, but conservation and creation. It is an agitation, in its direct purpose and ultimate tendency, conservative of property from waste, of industry from misdirection and oppression, of life from misery, disease and famine. It is conservative of individual happiness, and of national resource and revenue. It goes to create, multiply and diffuse human enjoyment, to promote human intercourse, to clear away obstructions to human progress, to cement the bands of

international unity, peace and concord, and to lead in that day when nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. It is no party cause, this of industrial freedom; no sectarian or class interest. . Whatever else we may differ about, here we may agree. Whatever else may be dubious, this is clear. Whatever ulterior views we may have of social and political good, here is this immediate and present good waiting to be realised first—the abolition of monopolies that restrict intercourse, fetter industry, tax toil and starve hunger, and the establishment of that universal freedom of trade which is the universal relief of want by the exchange of superfluity.

LECTURE VI.

MONDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1843.

FREE TRADE THE DESTINY OF THE PRESENT AGE.

BEFORE entering with you on the immediate subject of this evening's Lecture, I wish to notice one or two topics connected with the economics and morals of Free Trade hitherto omitted or but slightly touched, which belong essentially to the general subject of this course, and without which I should feel that my exposition of that subject was left unfinished. After which, having completed, so far as may be, our view of the economical and moral relations of free-trade principles, it will be my object to show you the affinity of those principles with the intellectual and social tendencies of the present age, their adaptation to the wants of the age, their accordance with the ruling ideas and spirit of the age. We shall find that the demand for industrial and commercial emancipation is not one of those vague, meaningless outcries of popular ignorance, party madness or class selfishness, which begin in passion and end in disappointment, that it is not merely a temporary, external expedient for remedying certain temporary, external evils—but that it has its root in truths which the best intellect of the age has long since proclaimed, which the common sense of the age has now accepted, and to which legislation *must* conform itself; that free trade is a necessary part of that course of civilisation in which we are advancing, and which Parliamentary majorities are as incapable of stopping as they are of stopping the flow of the Atlantic tides:—

in a word, that Free Trade, at once an economical necessity, an intellectual conviction, and a moral right, is the Destiny of the Present Age.

We found in the last Lecture, that trade, when reduced to its elements, is simply the relief of mutual wants by the exchange of mutual superfluities. This *mutual relief by mutual exchange* is the definition, the *rationale* of trade ; and the freedom of trade, the allowing want and superfluity to find each other out when, where and how they best can, and to meet on the terms most advantageous to both—the freedom of trade is implied in this definition ; follows by direct and necessary consequence from the very nature of trade. What I wish to add now is, that the benign and beautiful tendency of trade, when left to work itself out freely according to its own laws, is towards a point at which want and superfluity shall neutralise one another, and the products of all the soils and climates of the globe shall be brought, by easy and rapid interchange, within the possession and enjoyment of each. The tendency of trade, when left free, is towards *equalisation* in the supply and price of all the goods of life. It may be a tendency which never can, in the nature of things, quite realise itself, but still the tendency exists ; and it realises itself more and more the freer trade is left. Fluctuations and varieties there must and will be, in the nature of things, more or less, in the supply and price of a commodity like corn, which depends for its production on that which is itself variable—rain, wind and sunshine. But these fluctuations tend, in the nature of things, to adjust and rectify themselves, to oscillate within narrower and narrower limits, with every new step in the advance of civilisation. For what is civilisation, in its physical and material aspects, but quickness and facility of communication between man and man, between nation and nation ? and what is the tendency of quick and easy intercommunication, but to rectify inequalities—to neutralise a casual want here, by supplies drawn from a casual superfluity elsewhere ? In a country like Great Britain, with its immense accumulation of capital, its maritime

position and resources, its means of close and constant intercourse with all parts of the world, the supply and price of food ought to fluctuate from year to year only as the general harvests of the world fluctuate from year to year; only as the rain, wind and sunshine of the globe fluctuate from year to year. This is what might be, and ought to be. We, by our absurd and mischievous restrictive legislation, make prices fluctuate with every variation in the harvests of this small island; with every change of the weather in this most changeable of climates. We deny ourselves the benefit of that most beneficent provision of nature by which occasional deficiencies here are compensated by occasional superfluities there. We legislate for an uncertain and irregular supply of the bread we eat. We enact that every frosty night in spring and every ungenial day in summer shall spend its whole disturbing force on our own market, instead of allowing that disturbing force to diffuse itself, in scarcely perceptible proportions, over the wide market of the world. By the tricky, slippery, sliding scale—so characteristic, both by name and nature, of the souls that love it—we try, with clumsy, bungling ingenuity, to do that which nature and civilisation would do infinitely better for us: and we fail, as we deserve to fail. Since we have had this sliding scale, we have seen wheat one year under 40s.; we have seen it another year above 70s.; and we have seen it at all points between, up and down, up and down, as the winds change and the clouds come and go. All this is perfectly disgraceful to a country like this. It is a stain on our civilisation. It is a retrogression to barbarism. It is like going back to those early days of our history when there would sometimes be a famine in Northumberland and a glut in Essex; want of capital, want of mutual intelligence, want of means of cheap and secure transport, keeping Northumberland and Essex apart, and preventing the superfluities of the one from relieving and neutralising the wants of the other. Such a thing as scarcity and dearth ought never to be heard of in a country like Great Britain, which commands the trade of the world: it is disgraceful alike to the government that inflicts, and to the people that

endures it. We have the whole sweep of the globe at our command, from the valley of the Nile to the valley of the Mississippi; and we choose to shut ourselves up in this small island, and say we will take all chances of a bad harvest half-starving us. To keep up the landlords' sliding scale, we let ourselves be put in bodily fear, for some three months out of every twelve, of the sliding scale of our own British barometer.

Perhaps it will be said—and if I remember rightly it has been said, in debate, by that Statesman who is never at a loss for a statistical fact to give plausibility to a political falsehood—it has been said that in America, where there is no Corn-Law, prices fluctuate and vary almost as extravagantly as they do with us. There is nothing wonderful in this. Our Corn-Law deranges the trade of the world. It is an element of uncertainty and fluctuation all the world over. We refuse to America and other countries a regular and reliable market for their superfluous produce; they never can tell beforehand whether we shall buy up their superfluity to the last bushel, or whether we shall leave it untouched, a drug on their hands—and the consequence is, for them as for us, a most mischievous and harassing fluctuation of prices. We and our Corn-Law are a nuisance to the world. We make mischief everywhere. We destroy the natural, regular trade in food, which would be a blessing to other nations as well as to ourselves; and every now and then, when they do not expect us, when they do not want us, when they are not ready for us, we come pouring in on them with our gold like an invading army of locusts, lay our hands on every bushel of corn that all the bullion of the Bank of England can buy, sweep their markets bare, and leave famine behind. It was but three years ago, that we actually caused rioting and bloodshed in France, by invading that country with a demand which it had no reason to expect and was not prepared to meet:—on which occasion (as if to illustrate the monopolist doctrine of independence of foreigners by the tenure of the sliding scale) the French Government very wisely interfered and prohibited the exportation: we had made the famine for ourselves, and

by ourselves we must endure the famine. Such a thing never could have happened under free trade. Our neighbours would have been thankful for a regular trade with us, but they declined the annoyance of our fickle, greedy, chance custom. It is thus we perplex and derange the trade of the world. We counterwork the beneficently equalising influences of commerce and civilisation; we make, instead, uncertainty, fluctuation, vicissitude, with all their mischiefs and miseries—hot fits and cold fits, fever and ague, up and down, backwards and forwards, as the weather changes. We make uncertainty and fluctuation at home and abroad, and our very appearance as customers in the foreign food-market, instead of being hailed as a blessing, is dreaded as a calamity and abhorred as a nuisance.

All this, because we will not let nature alone; because we will not trust her simple and beneficent legislation. The natural laws of trade—how beautiful they are, when they are let work in their own way, unimpeded by the law of man! Beautiful and wonderful it is—as what is not beautiful and wonderful in nature's legislation—how, from the operations of scattered individuals, acting without concert, without combination, not one of them giving so much as a thought to that public good which all of them together unconsciously subserve—out of all this seeming confusion and chance-medley there results the most perfect harmony and order. Just think how all this mighty metropolis of London, with its two millions nearly of mouths, is fed—every day in the year and every year in the century—by the simple, unforced action of individual interests working in some tens of thousands of quite ordinary minds and hearts. There is no legislation to bring food into London, to measure the supply or fix the price of it; no sliding scale to hold the balance between too much and too little. There is no concert, no agreement, among the myriads that bring, day by day, their daily bread to the tens of myriads of this enormous world of a city: and yet the thing is done, and done well, done with all the certainty and equableness of law—with a certainty and equableness which the intermeddling of

human law-makers could only disturb and spoil. And why not trust the daily bread of all the world to the same wise and beautiful arrangement, letting all exchange with all, and each with each? What audacious presumption it is to think that, whether for a metropolis or for an empire, the legislation of Deity needs mending, or can be mended, by Acts of the British Parliament.

They tell us that a different principle applies when we come to trade with foreigners : we must so manage our trade with foreigners as to be *independent of foreigners*. "Independence of foreigners!" Why, what childish nonsense it is, for a nation which exists by foreign trade to talk of being independent of foreigners! Do not we depend on foreigners already for all that makes us the nation that we are? We depend on foreigners for the tea and tobacco that make seven millions of our revenue : we depend on foreigners for the cotton that feeds a million and a half of our people, and pays twenty millions of pounds sterling annually in wages : we depend on foreigners for the hemp that makes cordage and cables for our navy—and yet we talk of being independent of foreigners. It is curious, by the way, that for every one of these things so necessary to our national existence, we depend on foreigners with whom we are not on the best possible terms of friendship and confidence. We depend on foreigners—permanently and habitually we depend on foreigners—for the corn that is to feed more than two millions of people out of our twenty-seven : nay, for the very physic that is to keep us in health, we depend mainly on foreigners. We are dependent on foreigners by the whole amount of the largest export and import trade that the world ever saw : and a wise, honest, common-sense statesmanship would so extend and complete this dependence of us on foreigners and of foreigners on us, by securing an habitual and regular supply for our habitual and regular demand, as to place it beyond the reach of all the changes and chances of war and diplomacy.

"Independence of foreigners," for fear they should go to war with us! As if it were possible for any government

whatever, in peace or in war, to break up a mutually gainful commerce which habit has made a mutual necessity. The experiment has been tried; tried in this century; and it has failed; utterly, signally and shamefully failed. Napoleon tried it; but even Napoleon could not accomplish it. At the very top of Napoleon's power, when his word was law all over the European Continent, when Europe cowered before him and in all other things obeyed him—the Emperor of half the world was unable to insulate the nation of shopkeepers from European commerce. In the years 1809 and 1810, in the very heat and thick of our war with France—with all the power of France and Europe leagued against us—we imported, chiefly from France and countries under French control, the immense amount of 2,800,000 quarters of corn. We wanted to buy it, they wanted to sell it—and not all the custom-houses and bayonets in Europe could hinder it from coming: the only difference was that the insurance was at a somewhat higher per-centage. In that same war we were importing from Russia—at the very moment that we were at war with Russia—the naval stores without which we could not have carried on the war. It seemed a quite simple and easy thing for the Emperor Paul, on Napoleon's dictation, to issue ukase after ukase prohibiting the exportation of hemp for the British navy: but what came of it? Why, the Emperor Paul was one morning *found dead*. They strangled their Emperor Paul rather than lose their British customers: as the hemp was not allowed to be exported, they appropriated a portion of it for home consumption. The prohibition of the exportation of hemp was relaxed at a very early period indeed, in the reign of the Emperor Paul's successor. So impossible it is for mere political enmities or diplomatic expedencies to destroy a natural, habitual, and mutually profitable traffic between two great nations. Want and superfluity, demand and supply, will find each other out. People that have corn to sell *will* sell it where they have been used to sell it, let their rulers say what they will. Supplies which have been grown purposely for us, which are useless and burdensome unless taken by us, which can only be kept on

hand at a loss—supplies of a naturally perishable commodity too—will always find their way to us, in spite of all Milan decrees and Berlin decrees. They may block up the way with custom-houses, but that will happen again which happened then—the golden key will unlock the custom-houses. The true way, and the only way, to be quite sure of never suffering from commercial dependence on foreigners, is to let that dependence be permanent and habitual. The greater the dependence the less the risk; its reciprocity is its own best guarantee. In the history of the Dutch republic, we have the example of a nation holding its national life—and a great and glorious life it was—by the tenure of “dependence on foreigners” as they call it. Holland is bare of timber and destitute of stone; yet Holland built spacious cities and splendid palaces. Holland’s native industry cannot furnish one material for ship-building: yet Holland built navies that swept the flag of her tyrants off the ocean. Holland grows no corn: yet Amsterdam was long the granary of Europe. Holland is not so big as Wales: but dependence on foreigners made Holland a great European power.

The notion of independence of foreigners is destructive to all that makes Britain great. What is it that makes this small Island a first-rate power in Europe and the world; Queen of an empire on which the sun never sets—an empire stretching from China to the Cape and from the Cape to Canada, embracing under one sway a tenth part of the population of the globe? Is it Britain’s fertile acres? The acres are very good acres, but there are better beyond the Alleghany mountains and on the coasts of the Black Sea. Is it our superior agriculture? The agriculture of the one small Russian province of Tamboff, if we may credit my Lord Stanley (though I will not vouch for the fact of my own knowledge)—the agriculture of Tamboff will beat us over and over again. Britain is great, because Britain depends on foreigners, and foreigners depend on her; because the products of her industry bear a high exchangeable value in the market of the world, and bring back wealth, which wealth

makes power; because she lays all the nations of the earth under tribute—the glad and willing tribute of commercial interchange. This magnificent metropolis of ours, with its interminable streets and squares, its warehouses of wealth and its palaces of splendour, its institutions of science, charity and religion, and its theatres for art and song—this metropolis, drawing daily into its capacious bosom all the wealth of the world, and distributing that wealth again with every turning tide of its noble river—did the landlords build it? Did independence of foreigners make London? Did independence of foreigners make Lancashire? Lancashire, whose trackless morasses, tangled forests, impassable rivers and flooded valleys were a terror to the soldiers of the Norman Conqueror; Lancashire, which Camden speaks of, in his *Britannia*, with dislike and dread, as scarcely belonging to civilisation—was it domestic agriculture, and the landlords, and independence of foreigners, that made Lancashire the abode of 1,600,000 human beings (alas! that we can no more say, contented and happy human beings,) and its very soil—morass and forest no longer—worth six millions of pounds sterling annually? You might give the soil the fertility of Texas, and the farmers the science of so many Liebig's—but neither natural fertility nor scientific farming would ever make a Lancashire or a London out of the acres on which Lancashire and London stand. Lancashire and London, and the whole of that civilisation of which they are a part and which they represent, exist in virtue of that dependence on foreigners (if you will give a shabby name to a grand thing)—that dependence on foreigners which is but another name for the intercourse of man with man, the supply of mutual wants from the fund of mutual superfluities. "Independence of foreigners" would you have? Off with you to Crim Tartary, or Nova Zembla, or Alyaska, or any other bare, poor, out-of-the-world place, and be independent there—you are not fit for civilisation.

And now can any man believe—looking at the past history of this country and of Europe, at the present civilisation

which is the product of that past, at the ideas, tendencies and wants which this civilisation includes, and out of which our future will shape itself—can any man dream that this stupid, barbarous state of things, called “independence of foreigners,” and the monopoly which would starve a nation under pretence of realising it—that *this* constitutes the Destiny of the Present Age? The present age; this age so full of life and movement, so rich in discoveries and inventions for bringing man near to man; this age of steam and gas, of newspapers and mechanics’ institutions, of political agitation and political reform—are its tendencies to isolation, to restriction, to exclusion and monopoly? There is no one feature of the present age more marked and unmistakeable, none which more broadly and strongly distinguishes it from all the ages that have gone before, than its tendency to diffusion, to comprehension, to universality. The age is anti-monopolist to the heart’s core. Universality and diffusion; comprehension of the many within the pale of intellectual and social advantages heretofore monopolised by the few—this is the distinctive characteristic of that English and European civilisation which began with the great waking-up of nations in the sixteenth century, and of which we of the nineteenth century are far from having come to the end yet. We see this tendency to diffusion and universality at work in all directions. The monopoly of intellect is drawing to a close. All intellectual products are cheapened, popularised, diffused. Art and science, poetry and politics—all partake of this tendency; all are undergoing this process, are getting more and more popularised and universalised, in the spirit that animates them, in the forms they wear, in the interests they deal with, and in the external provisions that are made for their extended and diffused enjoyment. What a way we have come already, in this direction; even in so short a time as within the last twenty years! What a diffusing and equalising, what a popularising and cheapening there has been of every thing (except bread). Cheap political knowledge, in the newspapers (though even here they must take their tax); cheap science, in the Mechanics’ Institutions; cheap art, in Penny

Magazine wood-cuts that domesticate the sublime conceptions of Phidias and Raffaele in our cottages and workshops; cheap literature, in double-column reprints of standard works that had used to be found only in the libraries of the wealthy and the learned, in all the dignity of folio pages, wide margins and whole binding; cheap and rapid travelling; cheap and rapid dispatch of letters—communication from Dover to Donegal, and from the Land's-End to John o'Groats, done in hours where it once took days, and at a cost of pence where it used to be shillings;—these are signs of the age that mark, broadly and deeply mark, the destiny of the age; a destiny which bears all the characters of a law of nature; which works itself out with the steadiness and certainty of law; a destiny which consists in making the many participant of the mental and social advantages of the few, raising the standard of popular morality and enjoyment, clearing away obstructions, throwing open monopolies, enlisting opinion and legislation into the service of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and diffusing to each and all the best results of an advancing civilisation. And they think this is an age in which they can hold their hateful, sordid food-monopoly.

Monopoly belongs not to this age at all. We have nothing to do with it, except to crush it out of existence with all convenient speed. It is part and parcel of the feudalism which the age has outgrown. Not (you will please to understand) that the food-monopoly actually existed in the old feudal time. The "wisdom of our ancestors" did not legislate for scarcity and dearth, nor did "merry old England" derive any portion of its merriment from the whims and oddities of the sliding scale. For upwards of six hundred years after the Norman Conquest, what corn-laws there were really *were* corn-laws—laws in favour of corn—laws honestly though mistakenly intended to make bread plentiful and cheap. Monopoly, in its form, is modern; but in its spirit it belongs to feudalism. It is the modern manifestation of the feudal spirit; the petty, peddling, huckstering contrivance of modern times, for reviving and perpetuating the people's serfdom to the lords of the soil. We may say of the food-

monopoly, that it is the worst part of the feudal spirit, in combination with the worst part of the trading spirit ; the lazy insolence of the one, with the sordid greed of the other. It is the genius of feudalism in combination with the genius of chicane. It is feudalism with the light finger. It is feudalism reformed from burglary and highway robbery, and turned to the picking of pockets. Instead of those turreted and moated castles, whence the baron with his men-at-arms sallied forth, in coats of steel, to harry neighbouring villages and levy black-mail on the despised and defenceless industry of towns—we have now the hoax of the sliding scale, plundering industry of its earnings after a more circuitous and decorous fashion, but one which is equally effectual for the base robber-purpose. Feudalism is now off the road, has laid aside the warrior's coat of mail, and put on the coat of the Artful Dodger.

It will fall—this modern, decorous, nineteenth-century feudalism—as the grosser and ruder feudalism of the twelfth century has fallen. The cheat once found out (as it is found out,) and there is an end of it; except as a cheat, it never could have stood twelve months. Feudalism has been beaten too often and too long, to be victorious at last now. Again are the towns in league—not against the country, for town and country, crowded streets and quiet villages have all a common interest,—again are the towns in league against that tyranny of the castles which would lord it over town and country both; and as the towns conquered the castles once before, in centuries when feudality reigned in Europe, and extorted, from baronial pride and power, those municipal franchises out of which all our liberty has grown,—the towns are not going to be reconquered now. Monopolists are quite right in hating large towns. When they call London “overgrown,” and suggest in their Quarterly Review the advisableness of razing the half of it to the ground, they are true to the instinct of their selfish and sordid class-interest. But the towns will conquer; and that civilisation of which towns are the cradle and the home, that power of public opinion and public will which is formed, concentrated and expressed

in towns, will carry the day against all oligarchical monopolies and monopolists whatsoever. The towns of England have had the whole feudal oligarchy under their feet once, within the memory of the very youngest man living ; and what has been once may be again, *will* be again should the feudal oligarchy choose to bring it to that. As soon shall the ruined castles and fortresses of feudalism be rebuilt on the old foundations, the old empty moats refilled, the old crumbling buttresses clamped up again with new iron, the old baronial armour refurbished for new service ; as soon shall the old knights and men-at-arms that wore that armour rise from their cold beds in our abbeys and cathedrals, and sally forth with trumpets blowing and pennons flying, to desolate peaceful villages and busy towns with fire and sword,—as soon this as the perpetuation, in its vilest form, of that feudal spirit and power which makes the many toil without reward, and hunger without hope, for the pride and pleasure of the few—which, if perpetuated, would make grass grow in the streets of Manchester and turn Liverpool into a declining, third-rate sea-port town of a declining, third-rate country.

Monopoly belongs to a stagnant condition of society. Its natural fitness is for a nation and an age without movement, without growing power, without life. It is in direct antagonism to every thing like national progress ; it goes to keep down national growth. “To prohibit by a perpetual law,” says Adam Smith, “the importation of foreign corn and cattle, is in reality to enact that the population and industry of the country shall at no time exceed what the rude produce of its own soil can maintain :”—and the effects of a qualified and partial restriction are of course the same in kind with those of absolute and perpetual prohibition. To make the importation of foreign corn artificially difficult, is artificially to obstruct the population and industry of the country in their efforts to exceed what the rude produce of its own soil can maintain. Monopoly is a check on national growth. It says to a people, ‘Your allowance of food shall be just so much as can be grown for you (at such price as we, the monopolists, deem a remunerating price) on the acres of your

own soil—so much and no more; and if that is not enough you must make it enough, and take out the difference in starvation :—at least we would like to arrange the thing so; but as starving people are apt to give more trouble than the profit of starving them is worth, we will construct a path by which it shall be not quite impossible to bring more when more must be brought—only it shall be a difficult and crooked path, a path full of pitfalls and man-traps, a slippery path, a sliding scale, on which the bringers shall get many a perilous slide and disastrous fall. With this exception excepted, we tell you, you shall not grow—whatever your energy, skill, industry, resource, whatever your growing power—grow you shall not beyond the measure of the food-producing power of the acres on which you were born.’ This is the language, the spirit, the work of monopoly. It is a standing check on national growth, a standing hinderance to national progress: it is a law of obstruction, stagnation and death.

Now, is this nineteenth century an age—is this Great Britain a country—in which such a law bids fair for endurance? Is *this* the destiny of England in the present age—to stand still and stop growing? Do we give any signs yet of having done growing? “Lords and Commons of England,” said our own John Milton of us, two centuries ago, “Lords and Commons of England! consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors; a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit; acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discover; not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar *to*.” And is this less true of us now than it was when our great Defender wrote it? Is this British nation become slow and dull since then? Is the invention less acute, the spirit less quick, ingenious and piercing, the energy of discovery less subtle and sinewy? Have we yet reached that point beyond which our capacity cannot soar? Have we fallen back and slunk behind in the great march of nations? Have we lived out all our strength in the past, and left ourselves without a future? A wretched, suffering, distressed people we are: but whence comes our wretchedness? Not of weakness, but of obstructed

strength, of cramped and hindered growth. We have outgrown our own soil. There are more of us than that soil can feed. We produce more of the goods of life than the dwellers on that soil can use. Our industry, our energy, our resources, our numbers have grown, are growing, will grow—and want room to grow in. We “can’t get out,” as Sterne’s captive starling sung—“we can’t get out,” for monopoly keeps us in :—this is our distress. And it is to a people like this that monopoly gives the word of command, *As you were*. We cannot be as we were : there are twenty-seven millions of us. We will not be as we were, serfs and thralls of the soil’s lords. We cannot, shall not, will not stop growing. The power that has made England what it is will not work short time while the monopolists are getting on with their organic chemistry.

And in such an age as this to dream of chaining down a people’s industry ! It is an age of universal, irrepressible activity, life and movement. The destiny of this age, whatever else it may be—whatever doubts or shadows may overcast its moral and political future—is towards the perfecting and completing of that sovereignty of man over material nature which can only be realised through industrial and commercial emancipation. It is an age of scientific discovery and mechanical invention. The intelligence that plans was never more prompt and fertile of expedients, the will that labours and endures was never stronger to labour and endure than now. We see man everywhere advancing, with unexampled rapidity, to the knowledge which is power, and to the power which knowledge gives. We see him daily going on from victory to victory, carrying one contested point against nature after another ; daily reclaiming new territory, daily appropriating new treasures, daily combining the elements and forces of nature in new proportions and relations for the production of results which nature has suggested, indeed, but has not herself accomplished. Water, fire and vapour hear his voice and do his hests ; time and space themselves shrink up before him, in homage to that sovereignty whose sceptre is the piston-rod of the steam-engine. It is an age of progress, indefinite, accelerated progress towards man’s conquest of

nature and subjugation of the earth. And to this age it is that Monopoly stands up and says, 'Man shall not conquer nature, the earth shall not be subjugated, the Lancashire loom shall not send the plough to turn up the unstirred clods of the prairies of the Western world; hunger here shall not weave for nakedness there, nor shall nakedness there sow and reap for hunger here; the earth shall not yield her increase, nature shall remain unconquered, and man may wait unserved—please not produce so fast, good people, for the British acres cannot keep up with you, and the British rent-interest cannot let you feed off any other acres.'

Monopoly is counter to the spirit and power of the age, goes against the tendency of the age, is at war with the destiny of the age in *this*—that it is the cause of a class against a people. Such a cause, in such an age as this, is, in the nature of it, a losing cause. Not all the Parliaments in creation can ever make it any thing else. This is not an age in which any class-interest or privilege whatever can be successfully and permanently maintained against a people's right. Whatever faults the age may have, it has this transcendent and peculiar merit—that it is learning to recognise the paramount social importance of the great mass of the community. "What is the Third Estate?" asks Abbé Sièyes, in a pamphlet on the opening of the States General; "What is the Third Estate? *Everything*. What has it been hitherto? *Nothing*. What does it want to be? *Something*." And the Third Estate now *is* something, and is fast going on to be everything. This is a quite new fact in history, and it is destined to produce quite new results. That the Third Estate is something, is much more than a mere Third Estate, and is going on to be everything—this is the great ruling fact of the present age, which contains within itself the destiny both of the present and of future ages. It is a quite new fact: antiquity had it not; the middle-age feudalism had it not. The idea of the PEOPLE, the millions, as the supreme object of concern and interest for the legislator, the moralist, the educator, the economist—this is a modern idea; an idea peculiar to this age; an idea which is destined to rule the age, and to sweep

out of existence the last remnants of the iniquities and follies that contradict it. For the first time in European history, for the first time in universal history, the people are something. Governments and the classes that exercise an influencing control over governments are beginning to think about the people for other purposes than those of police and punishment. The conviction is forcing itself up in society that those who do the drudgery of society must be cared for; that they must not be mere drudges any more; that they must have the means not of living only, but of enjoying life; that they must have material comfort and mental instruction and recreation; that they must be raised in the scale of intelligence, morality and enjoyment; that there can be no health, no soundness nor safety for the body, while the working members are sick and faint. The signs of this meet us everywhere. We have seen governments in these later times which have not deemed it beneath their dignity, nor unworthy both of time and cost, to make inquiry into the physical and moral condition of the people: and in our Factory and Mines' Commissions, our Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissions, and our Sanitary Commissions, we have had some of the best working intellect of the country employed to examine and report on how life goes with the most needy and neglected of mankind.

The literature of this age bears its testimony to the fact that the people are now something. Literature is more universal in its tone, goes deeper into great social questions, deals with larger human interests. The poetry of feudalism and aristocracy is getting out of date; poets have less than ever to say or sing of knights and squires, lords and kings, and more than ever of the common emotions and experiences, joys and sorrows, that make the life of common men. History deals less and less exclusively with courts and camps, wars and diplomacies, and busies itself now with erudite investigations into the condition, as to work and wages, food and raiment, opinions, habits and enjoyments, of the millions of the people: and the genius of fiction will write you a three-volume novel all about a poor parish boy. In the literature of the age we find a growing and general recogni-

tion of that first of truths—that the people are something—

“ That we have, all of us, ONE HUMAN HEART.”

Monopolists themselves allow the people to be something: they have much to say of their sympathy with the wretched labourer, and drop a word sometimes about the rights of labour. Monopolists are horrified beyond measure at the thought of women and children working in factories (though when it comes to a question about their own mines, the flow of monopolist sympathies is somewhat abated); they climb into power on the shoulders of anti-poor-law philanthropists (whom, when in power, they quickly order to the right about); it is not for themselves and their own rents that they value their monopoly, but only for the poor agricultural labourer and his wages' sake (they give the poor creatures 7s. a-week and potatoes)—and when an unlucky Lord Mountcashel blunders out the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, they denounce him in all their press as something between knave and fool. Monopolists may talk so, with the pressure from without strong upon them: but when monopolists begin talking so, the question is settled, the cause of monopoly is at an end, the whole monopoly-principle is given up. It is at once owning that monopoly cannot, will not, dare not any longer stand before the world for what it is; but must mask itself with all convenient dispatch, to seem something which it is not. And it is true; monopoly cannot, will not, dare not look the world in the face without a mask. A higher power than any parliamentary majority forbids it; even that spirit of the age which contains within itself the destiny of the age—the spirit of humanity, the spirit of justice, the spirit of sympathy with the wrongs, and respect for the rights of labour. Industrial emancipation is the destiny of this age, for by it alone can industry have so much as a chance of ever getting that which the spirit of the age recognises as its due. By industrial emancipation alone can the millions that do the work ever realise their most just demand—a demand whose

justice is not for one instant affected by any kind or degree of folly, or even of criminality, in the means by which it may at any time have been mistakenly sought to be accomplished—the demand of a FAIR DAY'S WAGES FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK. They must have that, and they will have that: but they never can have that while monopoly stops the way.

Free trade is the destiny of this age, for free-trade principles are recognised and accepted by the intelligence of the age. The mysteries of economical science are mysteries no longer; the recondite wisdom of the Smiths, Says and Ricardos has become the diffused conviction, the common sense of society;—and the paradox, as men once deemed it, of universal commercial freedom, now falls on the ear as a familiar truism. Monopoly has no argument, makes no show of logical fight. Monopoly has not on its side one single first-class thinker: not one single great name; not one of the names that command contemporaneous reverence, and that, when tested by time, become authorities for after ages to bow to. Monopoly may be rich in dukes, but it is poor in thinkers—its hosts number many squires and justices of the quorum; but they are miserably ill off for philosophers. Actually, there is not one man of first-rate intellectual eminence, in parliament or out of parliament, who does not now acknowledge that free-trade principles are true principles; to hear them talk, they are free traders every one. When monopolist ministers, like the ancient Midianitish soothsayer, bless those whom they were hired to curse; when they enunciate free-trade doctrines as “doctrines of common-sense” which nobody can deny, they do but obey a destiny that they cannot resist, they render homage to a power—the power of the spirit of the age—which it were hopeless to withstand: and the same power which has dictated the enunciation of truths is strong enough to enforce their practical application. Those free-trade utterances of monopolist ministers of state—are they *spontaneous*, think you? are they the free-will expressions of the men's long-cherished convictions? Sincere they may possibly be; spon-

taneous they certainly are not. To any one who has watched the career of that Statesman to whom, more truly than to any other man breathing, may be applied the well-known motto of a sect or system of philosophy in itself of no great philosophical value—that Statesman of whom we may say, with most literal verity, that his “character is formed *for* him and not *by* him”—to any man who has watched the career of that Statesman from the early days of the Orange Irish Secretaryship to his recent advocacy of “free trade in the abstract,”—it will probably appear that, when Sir Robert Peel enunciates free-trade truths, he is but the organ of a mind and a will higher than his own, he does but speak the bidding of an irresistible necessity. That mind through which so many opinions and beliefs have flitted, in swift succession, like birds of passage, to reside each one for a brief summer season, and then to depart, the place that knew it once knowing it no more; that voice which has been heard on both sides of nearly all the great questions (sliding scale excepted) that have stirred this country for the last quarter of a century, now gives in a tardy and reluctant adhesion to a truth which the spirit of the age has already accepted as a theory, and which the destiny of the age will realise in practice. The doom of monopoly is sealed, for the intellect of the age has deserted and disowned it. Economical science repudiates it, and popular common sense scorns it. No man believes in it, no man is taken in by it; the mask is off, the garment of sophism and fallacy is worn to very rags and tatters: monopoly makes no fight; it only whines and blubbers, and begs, like some poor wretch in the felon’s dock, that justice will please be so good as allow it the “interval” of a long day. The “temporary” Corn-Law stands only on a majority temporary as itself.

That majority it is for us—it is for that power of public opinion and public will of which each one of us wields a portion—to break down and dissolve: that interval it is for us to abridge and cut short. Dream not, for one moment, that the destiny of the present age to industrial and commercial freedom will ever accomplish itself, without the right

use of right means: dream not that, either in this age or in any other age, free trade will come of itself, while class-interests, or supposed class-interests exist that are adverse to it. It will not come of itself—except in the abstract; in which form, unfortunately, it will not be of much use. We have got it already in the abstract. The perfect certainty of success which attends this agitation *is* a certainty only because the agitation is of a sort that commands success. If the people will lie down in stupid apathy, with shut eyes and open mouths, waiting for the Minister of free trade in the abstract to give free trade in the concrete, lie down they may as long as grass grows and water flows. We have got all the free trade already that we ever shall get, spontaneously, out of these abstract gentlemen. Sliding scale with improved pivot; free importation of foreign asses (the very last article, one would think, which we need import—the home market is excellently well supplied—native industry may here successfully defy all competition); a few thousand sheep and oxen, when the thing wanted is bread; cheap timber, when houses are void by the ten thousand, and empty ships are rotting in every port of the kingdom; and cheap French gloves, as if in mockery of our unemployed English hands—this, garnished and seasoned with Income-Tax, is all the allowance of free trade we get; until, with an earnestness, a unanimity, and a resolute determination which there shall be no mistaking, we demand more. It is not my province in these Lectures to offer you any detailed instructions as to the way of making that demand: for all further particulars inquire of the Anti-Corn-Law League, now in London—ready, willing and waiting to help all honest men who will but help themselves.

The position which Great Britain occupies in relation to this question of free trade, is one that strongly appeals to all the feelings of an honourable and high-minded patriotism. By the abolition of commercial monopolies, exclusions and restrictions, we of this country have it in our power to direct and help on the future civilisation of the world. At present we demoralise the world. We throw back civilisation. We

make the commerce of the world a principle not of attraction, but of repulsion; a source not of international unity, peace and concord, but of jealousy, suspicion, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness,—a root of bitterness, an apple of discord. We set the world a bad example, and the world follows that example. Tariff is met with tariff, exclusion is answered by exclusion, monopoly retaliates on monopoly—and so the curse spreads and spreads: the temper of nations is soured, and the fountains of international good-will and friendliness are poisoned. It is our own doing. Our Smiths and Mills and Ricardos may expound, ever so wisely and truly, the economics and morals of free trade—but other nations and their governments look not at our words but at our deeds, not at our philosophical disquisitions, but at our acts of parliament: they think we have grown great by restriction and monopoly, and they think they will do the same. The mischief is of our own doing: the only comfort is that it lies in our own power to undo it. By a total and final repeal of all commercial monopolies, restrictions, protections and prohibitions; by a legislative adoption of those principles of free trade which are principles of common sense and common honesty—we shall teach the world a great lesson which cannot go unlearned. It will be a grand act of national repentance and reform. It will be telling the world that we have tried monopoly, and found it a folly and a mischief. We shall have then given the world both warning and example, and the world will learn by both. We shall then have deposited, in the general experience of humanity, a truth which history never can forget to chronicle, and which must work and work beneficently through all time; we shall have nobly fulfilled what Milton declares to be the duty and the destiny of England—the “teaching nations how to live.”

And what but this makes England truly great? Of what are Englishmen proudest, but of their commerce, and of the intellectual and moral civilisation that waits on commerce, and of the position in which their commerce places them—in the vanguard of nations, at the head of the civilisation of

the world? Of what are we proudest? Is it of beating a few Tartar troops, and getting a new island of Hong Kong that we may call our own? Is it of destroying cities, burning bazaars, desecrating mosques, despoiling tombs beyond the Indus,—and bringing back for trophy a pair of rotten old gates—sham relics of the abominations of dying idolatries? Parliamentary votes of thanks may pass for such things: but not for such things does a people's heart rejoice. England's glory is in quite other things than these: in the extension of her commerce, and of all that naturally accompanies extended commerce—in the diffusion to remotest lands of her institutions, her arts, her language, her literature, her religion. One single piece of calico-print of Manchester make, that is borne on the wings of commerce to some semi-barbarous hut or tent, in some half-unknown, out-of-the-way corner of the world where England was never heard of and nothing English ever seen before—is a fitter topic of national glorying and rejoicing, does more for the honour and the power of England, does more to advance British interests and consolidate and extend British empire, than all the victories and trophies of Affghanistan, sandal-wood gates included.

THE END.

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